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# PCZONE

ISSUE 164 FEBRUARY 2006

ON YOUR KNEES!

## PREY

Exclusive! The shooter of the year hunted down!

MAKE IT STOP!

The 10 most embarrassing moments in PC games!

REVIEWED!

## PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES

Twice the hero, double the fun?

EXCLUSIVE!

## SWAT 4: THE STETCHKOV SYNDICATE

Storming playtest!

### STAR WARS GALAXIES

Has the return of the Jedi saved the online empire?

### FAMILY GUYS

Gangster No.1! Hands-on with mafia hit The Godfather

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TINY COMPO  
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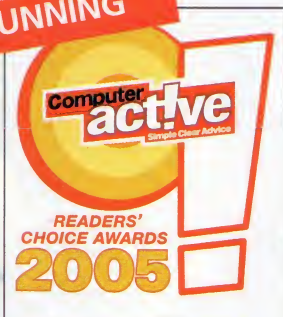
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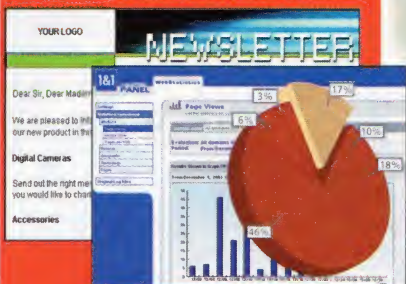
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COVER STORY

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## PREY

Exclusive! We get the scoop on Human Head Studios' gravity-defying sci-fi epic

DOMINIK DIAMOND 130

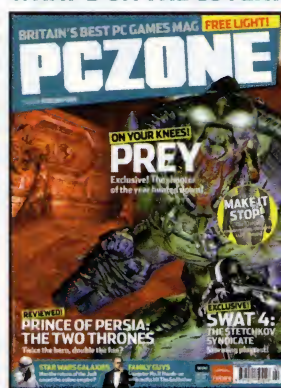
Please. Take *Doom*. Pickle it in formaldehyde, lock it in a chest, bury it in the earth and then wee on it



THE GODFATHER  
BADA-BING! FIND OUT  
IF EA'S GTA-CHASER  
WILL BE A HIT! 40



## WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



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54 POP: THE TWO THRONES

Too busy? *PC ZONE* in 66 words... *SWAT 4*: long-named expansion! Hill rolls about a bit, then our huge *Prey* exclusive. Third *POP* game arrives, followed by a whole load of mostly pub games. Wandy does his thing, Steve's Vordenman obsession scares us, how to play *The Movies* properly and then a great bit about David Braben.



## REPEAT PLAY

I'VE JUST COMPLETED *Half-Life 2* for the second time. "That's stupid Sefton," you might well say, "when there are over a dozen new games worth playing now. Stop flogging a dead horse – dig into your tight northern wallet and buy *Quake 4*." "Hey steady on!" I might then reply, with a certain indignation, "there's no need to insult me." "OK, sorry," you'd probably add after that, "but why *Half-Life 2*?"

Well, rather like listening to a favourite CD I haven't heard in a while, re-playing it brought back some great memories. *Half-Life 2* is like a tracklist of your fave band's best album; the Manhacks droning towards you in the sewers; the first time you get the gravity gun. Reliving each gaming moment was sublime – reassuringly familiar, of course, but sometimes surprising with bits I'd forgotten, or revealing subtle nuances and new depth I'd missed first time around.

However, it got my drink-addled brain thinking – is replayability a vitally important factor when considering buying a game, or should a 20-hour once-through provide enough value-for-money entertainment?

Many titles have bonuses and extra content if you complete the single-player game – but is anyone bothered? Of course, multiplayer games will have you coming back for years after the original release (*Counter-Strike* anyone?), but there aren't many games I've gone back to more than a year later – this, I reckon, is the mark of a true classic. So now, I've just started playing through *Call Of Duty 2*, *Civ IV* and, yep, *Quake 4* – I'll keep you posted on whether I fire them up again in 12 months...

Jamie Sefton

Jamie Sefton, editor



**PSYCHONAUTS WANTED THIS NOVEMBER  
FOR HILARIOUS THIRD PERSON ADVENTURE THROUGH 13 UNIQUE LEVELS!**



**FROM TIM SCHAFER, THE CREATOR OF  
GRIM FANDANGO AND DAY OF THE TENTACLE**

# Psychonauts

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**90%**  
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PC Format

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Double the trouble, twice the fun

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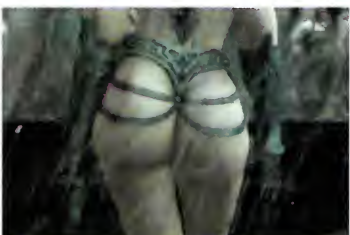
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### What's the worst that can happen? Broken pelvis? Fractured skull?

STEVE HILL'S REALITY CHECK 28



### FREEPLAY/FREWARE

#### Freeware

Steve Hogarty knows a good bargain when he sees one

**MARIOWEEN DX**  
Mario comes to PC! Almost...

**GAME OF THE MONTH**  
YELLOWTAIL: Don't let your all pointer

**WEBGAME OF THE MONTH**  
Web Sudoku

### ALIEN ARENA 2006

Some short while ago in a galaxy quite far away

**KNIGHT ONLINE**  
Never-offline knights

**FREE GAMES!**

### 102 FREWARE We bring you the best from the land of the free games - don't be silly, put that wallet away



# RETURN TO THE DAYS OF THUNDER



"VINTAGE"



92% "FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS"

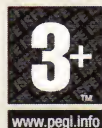
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UPFRONT



# MEET THE TEAM

Losers, boozers and Jacuzzi users



## STEVE HILL

**FREELANCE POKER PLAYER**

**AGE** Thirtysomething

**LIKES** TV & Football

**DISLIKES** People

**FANCIES** Anything with a backbone

**FAVE GAME** Football Manager

**PLAYING?** Mario Kart DS and City Of Villains (forced)

Jet-setter, bon vivant, man about town and social whirl, Hill maintains that he won't get out of bed for anything less than America or operating heavy machinery. During his ZONE service, he's been subjected to more bone-crunching injuries than is strictly necessary, seen more sights than an American tourist and played more online games (for cash) than is healthy for a sane man. Luckily, this is Hill we're talking about and he checked in his sanity a long time ago when he began writing about games for money. As a result, the bitterness rises higher with every passing month.



## WILL PORTER

**News Editor**

This month, Will's decided to move to the wilds of Croydon, home of Nestlé UK. He denies that the lure of chocolate is the reason behind the move.

**WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?**

**SWAT 4: The Stetchkov Syndicate**



## STEVE HOGARTY

**Staff Writer**

This month Steve has been discreetly placing all of his belongings under his desk, "in case, you know, I have to leave in a hurry". He's also recently moved to Walthamstow, home of East 17.

**WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?**

**Mario Kart DS (let's be honest)**



## JAMIE SEFTON

**Editor**

Sefton helped his family celebrate the birth of his first nephew by decking him out in a full Leeds kit and signing him up for trials with the youth team.

**WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?**

**Half-Life 2: Lost Coast and Call Of Duty 2**



## SUZY WALLACE

**Disc Editor**

Not that she's living up to stereotypes, but Suzy has spent most of the month shopping. Xmas shopping for family, as well as buying random old people tins of biscuits to see them through the winter.

**WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?**

**Need For Speed: Most Wanted**



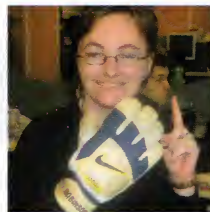
## PAUL PRESLEY

**Section Editor**

Prezzer, busy compiling his list of made-up words (like Prezzer-tastic), has begun to consume Chocomilk at the alarming rate of 11 cups per day. He says it makes him stronger.

**WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?**

**The Movies and D&D Online**



## CLARE LYDON

**Production Editor**

Spurs-mad Clare recently had a one-on-one encounter with the mighty Paul 'England's No. 1' Robinson's glove. Her subsequent giddy daze has meant missing deadlines is now a breeze.

**WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?**

**The X Factor Sing**

**STUFF THAT'S HELPED US THIS MONTH...** Madonna's latest, *Space Zombies (In Space): The Patch* and free coffee vouchers  
**STUFF THAT'S BEEN OF NO HELP WHATSOEVER...** Chocomilk withdrawal symptoms, spreading cold viruses and Xmas hangovers

## STUFF WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

**PRISON 120 Mins** How to tell the nice prisoners from the big-time villains

**CHOCOMILK 223 Mins** How everybody (except Will) is addicted

**RUDE CODES 3 Mins** How the word 'cock' appeared in one of Steve's installation codes

**BIZARRE NOISES 17 Mins** A scary sound (almost like giant robots fornicating) when we're getting Chocomilk. Seriously

**THE HIPPODROME 48 Mins** Apparently the Victorians made hippos jump from really high diving platforms

**CHICKEN 20 Mins** Why can't it be 'rare' or 'well done'?

**UWE BOLL 35 Mins** Suzy has his personal email address and is now in regular contact with the man

**JOSSY 29 Mins** Someone we know, their dad might be Jossy from Jossy's Giants

**OUR ELEVATOR 99 Mins** The third-floor judder, the mysterious 'UG' floor and the five minute waits

**SHOCKING NEWS 141 Mins** How very shocked we were at the shocking news

## WIN!

Tiny Compo. Give us the correct answer to the mini-question on the cover and you might win some fabbo prizes. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: Tiny Compo (164), PC ZONE, Future, 1 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NA. The first correct entry sneezed from the competition nostril wins. Closing date: February 1, 2006. The winner of Issue 162's Tiny Compo was Mr Harry Swales of Newcastle, who knew that the D-Day landings took place in 1944. Well researched, sir!

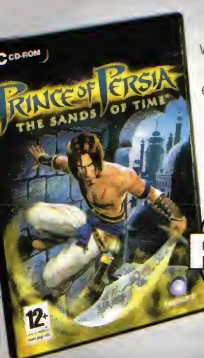
**GENERAL COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS:** 1. Only completed entries received before the closing date will be entered. 2. Winners will be notified by post. 3. No cash alternative. 4. Prizes not necessarily as shown. 5. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The editor's decision is final. 7. Responsibility cannot be accepted for lost or undelivered entries. 8. Competitions are not open to readers outside the UK or employees of Future or its affiliated companies, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the competition. Phew!

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This is a classic action-adventure game which we described as "a near-seamless gaming experience... Ubisoft has kissed a frog and it's turned into a prince". PC ZONE verdict 84%



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Closing date: February 2, 2006



# LETTERS

Red letters, French letters – *Jamie Sefton* answers 'em all



## SCORE WHORE

Just wanted to inform you that the list at the back of issue 163's *Ultimate Guide To PC Gaming 2006*, detailing every game ever reviewed in *PC ZONE* and its score is the best idea you have ever had, ever. The best idea since prawn cocktail-flavoured crisps, in fact. With the list, I have now finally been able to answer all my gaming-related questions, such as was *Big Brother The Game*, with its 1 per cent, the worst ever? I now know that it was beaten by issue 17's *Newsweek 3 Globocop*, which got an imperceptibly inferior 0 per cent. I also discovered what score you gave *Enemy Nations*. This is a game I got at the checkout of a random shop specialising in cheap stuff in Belgium

and then rather liked (64 per cent, you tight-fisted bastards).

I think you should make it a regular feature, then a whole new shipment of lonely, bored people every month can correct you if you say *System Shock 2* was reviewed in issue 62, when any fool knows it was issue 82.

Peter Chainey

Thanks Peter. Other interesting facts include the fall of franchises such as *FPS Turok*. This went from *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, 90 per cent, to *Turok: Evolution*, 28 per cent, while the lowest-scoring *Star Wars* game – *Star Wars Galaxies: Rage Of The Wookiees* – got just 57 per cent. Anyone for any more?

## VERY SILLY

I was playing *The Movies* and noticed that one of my janitors was named Martin Korda. Send me a prize for noticing this or else I'll give his name to the Inland Revenue as I'm sure his pixelated form is being paid cash in hand.

Cliff Mallinder

Now Cliff, are you really sure you want to threaten our man-mountain Martin? I've passed on your address to him, so if you see an angry, bear-baiting Slovak stomping up your driveway, barricade the door...

## THINK OF THE CHILDREN!

*PC ZONE* please help! I'm a 13-year-old gamer who loves playing rip-roaring, blood-letting PC titles such as *F.E.A.R.* and *Doom 3*. However, because they're 18-rated by the BBFC I can't buy them, and have to resort to either going round my mate's house (who's 17 and can get away with buying them) for a session, or attempting to hoodwink an ageing relative into buying them for me.

Why are such games rated as adult-only? I see

more violent, disturbing news stories on *Newsround* than anything in *The Suffering*. Tell the BBFC to stop being wimps!

Timothy Ibson

Well Tim, the law is the law, and whether you like it or not, it's there to protect supposed 'vulnerable' members of our society such as yourself. However, as *PC ZONE* is now an 18-rated magazine (so we can continue to run movies and demos of *Doom 3* et al under BBFC rules), you shouldn't be reading us now. Put the magazine down, remove any images of gibbing, and go back to the *Dandy* comic for another five years. Oh, and if *Newsround* is really more violent than *The Suffering*, then it really must have gone downhill since John Craven left...

## GRUMPY OLD MAN

Do you ever suffer 'ageism' from buying PC games? My one release/escape from this arse-wipe of a society is buying myself games, and I've done this since the PC/games first appeared. So I was amazed when standing to pay for a collection of recent titles, a woman who had the tribe of Israel with her (in the form of her children) leaned over to me and said: "Those for you?"

What? Should I be younger-looking? Do I have to have a toddler at my side, a wife or miserable girlfriend moaning about the amount of money I spend on PC games to make me look respectable? Why can't I buy videogames at my age? All I can say is: "Bollocks!" I say this quite often now.

Who are they to tell me to grow up? So please leave me alone – it's all part of my life not yours! I have something to look forward to; new expansions, mods and the sheer pleasure of playing online, instead of getting drunk and waiting for a bleeding taxi at 3am in the freezing morning, outside some crappy nightclub where that woman you fancy walks home with the gorilla of a bouncer! Believe me – I am a happy 40-year-old

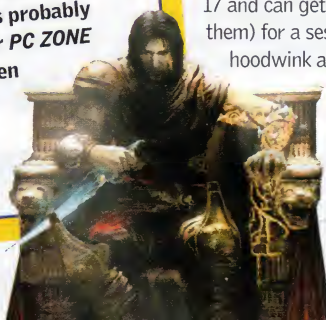
## Letter of the Month

### History Lesson

I'm writing because I'm a little mystified about the article on page 24 of issue 162 examining the, er, historical accuracy of the *Prince Of Persia* games. My perception of the games has always been of an Arabian Nights-themed setting. So why does this article compare the series with Achaemenid Persia? This seems anachronistic, given that the first Arabian Nights stories are thought to have appeared about 1,000 years later. Please feel free to correct me if I'm completely wrong about the perceived setting.

Tom Ingle

You're absolutely right Tom. Although Will Porter 'thoroughly researched' that news story, it appears he managed to miss the correct time period by a millennium. He has subsequently been sent on a series of evening courses on the Persian empire. This is probably the most intelligent letter *PC ZONE* has ever received, and even though we didn't quite understand some of the big words, you deserve your graphics card.



**WIN!**

**ONE OF THESE!**

You need a good graphics card. We need letters. (Good ones, mind, not rubbish ones like 'PC ZONE rulez, can I have a graphics card please?')

Well, serendipity now! The two needs have collided, right here, right now. Write us a letter today. If it wins Letter of the Month, we'll send you a prize tomorrow. Hurrah!



## SAY WHAT?

### Why can't I buy videogames at my age? All I can say is: "Bollocks!" I say this quite often now...

DogGreen on the joys of growing old



who will continue buying PC games as long as I can!  
 DogGreen

Yeah! Er... You tell 'em DogGreen!  
 (Backs away slowly...)

#### TAKING THE PISS

Why is it that, in an age of ultra-realism in games, nobody ever stops to have a piss or grab a bite to eat? Personally, if I'd been playing *F.E.A.R.* and every few hours or so had to find a lavatory in which to

relieve myself (possibly with some slow-motion blurry effects to keep things interesting), I reckon I would've been drawn even further into what is already a hugely involving game. Also, if Sam Fisher had to pause for a moment to eat a cheese-and-ham sandwich his mum had prepared earlier that morning, it'd really add a new dimension to the stealth genre.  
 Jamie Richards

**Fantastic. Imagine how much more absorbing *X3: Reunion* would be if**

**you had to cope with zero-gravity toilets? Or how shocking it would be to stumble upon the *Quake 4* canteen dishing out Stroyent Twizzlers to under-nourished Strogg troops? More realism in games now please!**

#### LAZY BONES

I'm a lazy gamer who can't be bothered to learn complicated games. So, I'd like to share one of my rules of thumb for choosing which games to play with you all. If the booklet's too big for the case, then the game's too complicated.  
 R Morris

**You certainly wouldn't get on with *Civ IV* then – the manual is bigger than most *Harry Potter* novels. However, your laziness means you're missing out on class titles such as *Civ IV* and others, including *Age Of Empires III* and *The Movies* – games with real depth that only the PC can support. Buy an Xbox 360 instead...**

#### NOT A FILTH PEDLAR

It is to my understanding that you received an email on the 26 November, 2005 that contained explicit material. I

The best film I've made in *The Movies* so far earned 200K, was called *Saddle Squall* and involved a guy walking across the desert.  
 -Liquid\_Virus

You won't be shocked to learn that the epic horror-fest I'm planning is called *Paws Of Evil*.  
 -PawsofEvil

Do *Jurassic Park*. I want a full two-hour presentation on my desk by 11pm.  
 -Rjcanty

Now we can all thank each other come the Oscars, then stab each other in the backs in a cocaine-fuelled orgy of wasted talent.  
 -doomus

*The Movies* has given me a greater appreciation for directors – like many others, I assumed I could 'do their job' as well as, if not better. However, looking through the films on the Lionhead website, it's apparent that movie production is really, really difficult...  
 -CobaltNova

Join in the forum fun at  
[www.pczone.co.uk](http://www.pczone.co.uk)



## MY IRON JUNG

For three years ZONE staff members have worked to craft renowned creator of Analytical Psychology, Dr Carl Jung (1875-1961), out of metal. A fount of knowledge, fed with gaming data from past and present, he exists for your enlightenment...



#### DEAR DR JUNG,

**Q** Is there ever going to be a *Dungeon Keeper 3* coming out or what? I've been waiting years after watching the trailer.  
 J Bernard

**A** Seeing as Bullfrog was absorbed by the mighty Electronic Arts back in 1995, the rights to the *Dungeon Keeper* series lie locked away somewhere pretty damn secure. *Dungeon Keeper 3*, as it was, was canned back in 2000 since "opportunities to develop new intellectual properties on new platforms such as PlayStation 2" were a greater EA priority. Seeing as so many *Dungeon Keeper* bods now reside at fortress Lionhead, a true sequel is pretty doubtful. *Evil Genius* is the closest game you'll get.

#### DEAR DR JUNG,

**Q** Flicking through your almanac of PC ZONE review scores, I couldn't help but notice a game called *EF2000* getting a massive 97 per cent. What the hell is it?  
 Darren West

**A** It's a flight sim Darren, and one that Duncan McDonald (otherwise known as Mr Cursor) liked an extraordinary amount. Flight sims, you see, were amazingly popular back in the mid-1990s – where anything in 3D would provoke gasps of amazement and unexpected prolapses. Taking to the skies with a Euro Fighter and dealing death to Russians, it was (and remains) a PC ZONE barn-stormer. It was in all good shops as of six years ago.

Send your gaming questions and queries to [drjung@pczone.co.uk](mailto:drjung@pczone.co.uk)



# LETTERS



@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ letters, pc zone, future, 1 balcombe street, london, nw1 6na

can assure you all that I have absolutely no idea as to who sent this email, or why they did it, but I can safely say that it was not me that sent it out. Apologies if anyone was offended by the material.  
Nick Jones

**Yeah, yeah, we believe you Nick. I was actually really offended by the truly degrading, disgusting picture you didn't send, and so was the rest of the team when they asked me to forward it to them.**

## NO POIROT

Win the ultimate gaming PC, you said in your *Ultimate Guide To PC Gaming 2006*, free with issue 163. That seems appealing, but why does the smallprint say that competitions are not open to readers outside the UK? That hurts you know – I live in Belgium. I know we have our own cultural habits – chips with mayonnaise, for example – but do you have to exclude me in such a cold manner? It's not as if you'd have to wrap up the Alienware in waterproof material and paddle it over here yourself if I win. They dug a hole across the channel you know, with big metal objects moving things back and forth. Come on, give me a chance (read this in a very corny way, Bambi eyes and all) and please register my answer!  
A. X2: *The X Strikes Back*.  
Frederiek Dumaray



STEVE'S just a slave to your mag.

## PC ZONE Around the World



PC ZONE flying over a ruddy great big hole in the ground.

We want photos of you with PC ZONE in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!

**Oh, go on then Frederiek, just this once we'll allow you to enter the competition! Wrong answer, sorry.**

## ZONE SLAVE

I'm glad to see that an Irishman has joined the ranks of PC ZONE (yes, I am talking about Steve Hogarty). However, as a fellow Irishman, I'm concerned for him. You say he just showed up one day, and that you're allowed to keep him as long as you feed him.

Is he some kind of slave? You have to admit the photos of him look rather peculiar, as he looks like he's away with the fairies. I really hope you treat your new slave kindly – just make sure that he doesn't make a show of the Irish, as a lot of Irish read this magazine...  
Greg Moroney

**Steve is our scarily-young staff writer (he was born in 1987!) and yes, he is technically our slave, who we force to write half-page reviews of *The Sims* expansion packs and rubbish third-person action-adventures. But don't worry, he won't make a show of the Irish – we'll just re-print this photo of him**

**drunk and asleep at a recent house party as proof.**

## THE END

I have to agree with Paul Biggs letter in issue 162. I too am disappointed at the general trend in your magazine for schoolboy toilet humour. It's no longer suitable to have your magazine around the house for my three sons to read and therefore I've cancelled my standing order. While your cover-discs have an age rating, the magazine does not, thereby in my opinion breaking publishing rules on explicit content. Please bear in mind that they would have been your future readership. Thank you for all the great content over the years; I will miss what was a very good read.

Peter Radoux

**I'm sorry we've offended you, but surely schoolboy toilet humour is EXACTLY what your sons would like to enjoy? PC ZONE has always been like this – you should have read it when Charlie Brooker was writing for us. Never mind – I'm sure they'll find other suitable teen-reading material under the nearest hedgerow... [P-7]**

## IDIOT'S CORNER

**Real calls from real idiots...**

Hello, PC ZONE?

### IDIOT

Hi there, I'm just calling to see whether you'd be interested in going to a party that's promoting new hardware products?

### PCZONE

I think we've already spoken about this yesterday? I gave you Phil Wand's contact details.

### IDIOT

Oh...

### IDIOT

Erm...

### IDIOT

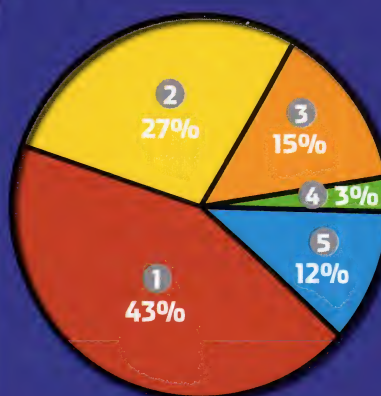
Yes you did.

### IDIOT

Goodbye!  
(Hangs up.)

## The Big Question

Reactions to the alternate *The Matrix: Path Of Neo* ending



1 Horror: 43%

2 Disbelief: 27%

3 Repulsion: 15%

4 Gaseousness: 3%

5 Despair: 12%



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**COVER STORY** PREY

**COVER STORY**

# PREY

Get down on your knees and beg for mercy.  
The Invasion is coming sooner than you think...





**A** **LIENS EXIST.** They drift around the cosmos in vast spheres held together by the gravitational pull of a single star. They beam Native Americans up into their vast caverns. They possess the bodies of eight-year-old girls and make them hurl other eight year olds onto spikes. In fact, they get up to all manner of nastiness and it's about time that someone did something about it. While we're writing to our MP and setting light to the 'Science Of Aliens' exhibit at the Science Museum, why don't you follow this neon yellow arrow to our *Prey* expose? We wrote it just for you...

**PAGE**

**46**





NEWS EDITOR Will Porter

PCZONE

# UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming

## Gamers are from Venus

**T**HE GOOD NEWS is that I'm moving in with my girlfriend. The bad news is that she doesn't like games and is convinced that I'm addicted to something unhealthy. Her evidence? My pallid complexion, aversive reactions to sunlight and general unwillingness to watch *Coronation Street* with her. For some reason she's got it into her head that playing games until three in the morning, then dragging myself into work after a fitful night's sleep dreaming about sniping is necessarily a 'bad thing'. The daft, yet adorable and wonderful creature that she is.

So this is an appeal to the *ZONE* readership. Do I go into this with a 'love me, love *Civilization IV*, love the noble race of the British and hate the Romans' attitude? Do I stem the natural urges that so often lead me to spend every spare five minutes shooting gangsters in the face? Or (the current favourite) turn the spare room into a bastion of my nerdiness, cover the walls with screengrabs of ElfieMoon in various *World Of Warcraft* picture-postcard locations and spray my scent like a territorial tomcat? Or, do I find peace and balance in the force, learn mutual understanding and other such dull activities?

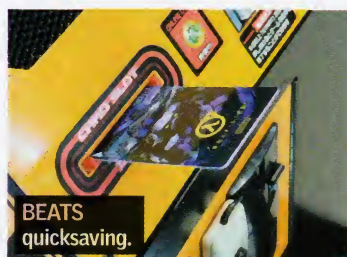
My future happiness is essentially in your hands, dear reader. I'm offering my life-course over to the whims of the nation – it's like a democracy-assisted *Choose Your Own Adventure* book. Only it's actually my adventure, and being carried out in Croydon rather than a network of text-based Mayan tombs. What do you reckon?



## GORDON FREEMAN-SAN

hl2survivor.net/

**Japan gets a taste of *Half-Life 2*, arcade-style**



BEATS quicksaving.



NO manual crowbar though.

**THE JAPANESE, EVER** tentative of the world of first-person shooter, never really warmed to our favourite be-gingered scientist. In fact, place a copy of *Half-Life 2* in a room full of Japanese businessmen and they'll jump on their chairs and squeal like girls, batting hopelessly at the offending game with large broomsticks. That's why our oriental friends have repackaged the game for the Eastern market – gone are the dimly lit desktops, sticky mice and dodgy keyboards, here to stay (in Japan at least) are the bright yellow cabinets, duel joystick controls and flashing lights of the arcade.

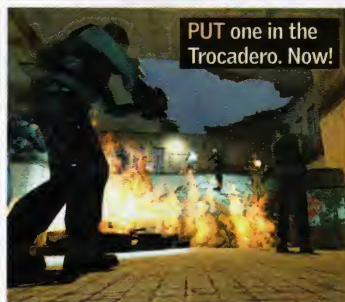
With an expected release date of March, the *Half-Life 2: Survivor* cabinets resemble a racing game arcade machine more than anything else, with two pedals (for jumping and ducking, as well as the obvious buggy controls), smart card compatibility for your saved games, a revamped and heavily tweaked single-player mode and a full-on eight-player



KILL the combine enemy (sic).



REMEMBER these things?



co-op and deathmatch mode between arcade cabinets all over the country.

Unless you're willing to pay the hefty airfare, or are Japanese yourself, the chances are you'll never ever get to sit inside one of the things, but it's pretty sexy stuff. Rumours of a similar Japanese conversion of *Age Of Empires III* and *Sid Meier's Pirates!* were scotched at the time of going to press.

**STOP PRESS!**

### BioShock shock

Rumour has it that 2K Games has pounced on Irrational's spiritual successor to *System Shock*. Those not excited are thought mad.

### Joint Task Force

Top-down jollity is coming through modern-day United Nations action RTS *Joint Task Force*, making you both appease the press and blast the bad guys.

### Splinter Cell 4

Fears that Sam Fisher has gone mad and bad have been somewhat allayed through the unconfirmed report that his next foray will be subtitled *Double Agent*.



24

## SWAT 4: The Stetchkov Syndicate

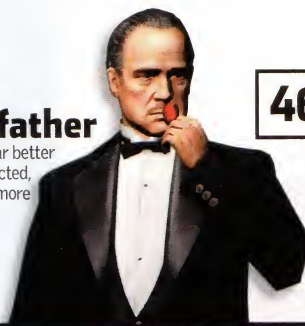
Who are the Stetchkovs?  
What do they syndicate?  
Can we tazer them?



40

## The Godfather

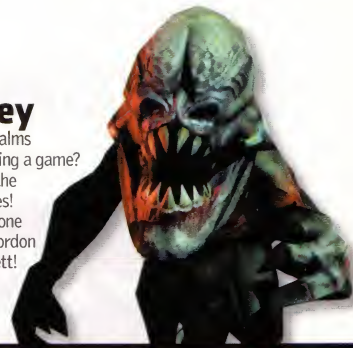
Looking far better than expected, and a bit more violent to boot.



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## Prey

3D Realms releasing a game? Stop the presses! Someone call Gordon Bennett!



# Sensi Reborn

www.codemasters.co.uk

## PC ZONE hero, Jon Hare reflects on the surprise return of Sensible Soccer



**Do you reckon that you'll be a serious competitor for the likes of PES and FIFA?**

I personally believe they are starting to get old

and predictable – they're victims of their own success. They're slow and uninspiring and are desperately in need of a shot of adrenalin to liven them up. I also think that *Sensi* can sell as well as (rather than instead of) *FIFA* or *PES*. The football market needs another quicker, more easily accessible and fun game to play right now – ours fits the bill perfectly.

**Well, we certainly miss it.**

Yeah, our research shows us that both *FIFA* and *PES* players

like *Sensi*, it's still most people's second-favourite football game.

**Why is the rebirth happening now?**

It's been prompted by the shrinking number of licences with value attached that are on the market – it's forced companies to look more towards their own back catalogue rather than risky new products. And there's also the successful release of *Sensi* on mobile and radical megadrive pad...

**For our younger and less civilised readers, could you explain what the magic of Sensible Soccer is?**

Lots of things: quick fluid gameplay; ease of picking it up and playing; the zoomed out view that gives excellent vision for passing, dribbling and building moves; the aftertouch



DER der der di  
duh duh der duh.



DI der di  
der di duh.

that allows pixel-perfect finishing as you bend the ball into the top corner of the net...

**So is the new version a game for the loyal old-guard, or do you think you'll get a new audience as well?**

I think the old guard will probably play it first, but we expect a lot of uptake from people watching others playing it. It's just the sort of game that makes you want to have 'just one more go'.

**We broke our joystick ages ago, will we need a new one?**

Actually it plays really well on a joypad.

Ace.



DER der der di  
der der der duh.



ETC, etc.

# Up the Junction

## Secret 'toon project at Junction Point is both Sourced and Steamed

www.junctionpoint.com

**WARREN SPECTOR**, he of beard, *Deus Ex* and great gaming genius, is working on a super-secret project with a Looney Tunes tinge – using both Valve's Source engine and Steam delivery system. The clues to the game's inherent wackiness come from the Junction Point Studios' job page, which stresses that they're not after 'people who do space marines or urban gang-bangers', but instead those who 'can conceive, sketch (and maybe even model and animate) cartoon mice, cats and wabbits'. Going on to describe a job that involves fleshing out surreal Wagnerian opera sets (perhaps a reference to the classic Bugs Bunny effort with the *Ride Of The Valkyries*) and idolising classic Hollywood toons, Junction Point promises a game that's 'looking to break all the rules'. *Toonstruck* meets *Deus Ex* meets *Half-Life*? Dear god, count us in!

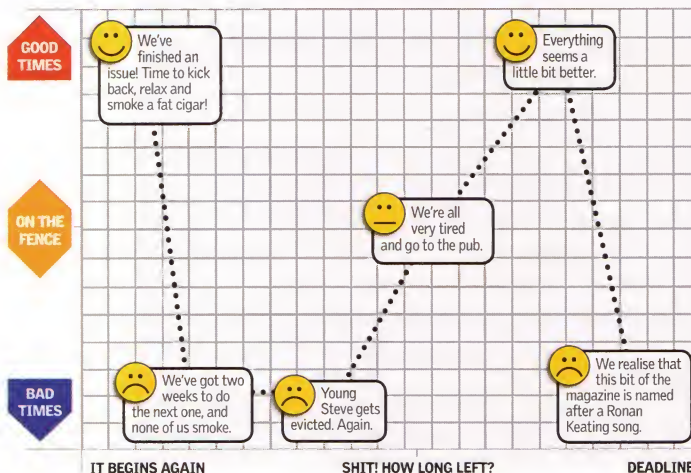


## STUFF

Stainless Steel Studios is no more, but *Rise & Fall:*

*Civilizations At War* lives on. That's the word from the men at Midway. Having apparently lost a fair wedge of funding (for reasons unknown) Stainless has sunk, and its high-completed RTS game has been taken by Midway to be finished elsewhere. A 2006 release is still promised, but it's still a shitty situation for all concerned.

## LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER







Dear Willbur,

That *Star Wars*, eh? What a foetid, rotting carcass of bankrupt creativity it's become. I'm sure you'll agree that given the steadily progressive decline in quality of any game foolhardy enough to carry the moniker '*Star Wars*' in front of it, along with the equally childhood-memory-destroying nature of Lucas's three prequel 'films', it's surely time we put an end to this misery. No more games based on *Star Wars*. You know it's the only answer.

Paul J Presley Esq

Dear Prez,

Just because LucasArts is chasing the cash rather than the dream doesn't mean that *Star Wars* games are at an end. I have 11 words for you: *Knights Of The Old Republic* and *Knights Of The Old Republic II*. You've argued yourself into a hole, and we've only just started this column.

Will Porter

Dear Will,

Listen, I'm not arguing that *KOTOR* was bad, my point is that the mountain of dross that currently carries the *Star Wars* name is destroying any credibility the franchise once had. One game alone can't stem the tsunami of shit, and better to stop now while we still (vaguely) think well of the series, than sink further into broken hearts and ruined dreams. PP

Dear Prez,

Where's your hope? Where's your soul? You know deep down that another amazing *Star Wars* game is waiting to be made. A first-person one with physics-based Force powers, or a reimagining of the *X-Wing* games? Come on Prez. There is still good in you. I can feel it. WP

Dear Will,

And this mystical, fabled, fabulous game-in-waiting is being made where? By whom? Meanwhile, another expansion/nail in the *Star Wars Galaxies* debacle and a so-so looking RTS are actually happening, while the piss-poor *Battlefront II* is riding high in the charts. Live in the real world, man. PP

Dear Prez,

I don't know. Someone, somewhere must be making it. If you don't believe in *Star Wars* anymore then maybe you should be thinking about a career change. WP

Dear Will,

Hmm, not a bad idea. Anyway, I didn't kill the *Star Wars* dream, it was killed for me by *Pod Racer*, *Obi-Wan*, *Force Commander*, *Yoda's sodding Desktop Adventures...* PP

Dear Prez,

Criticising *Yoda Stories* is crossing the line I'm afraid. Argument over. WP



## GO COMMANDO

**Commandos: Strike Force sneaks up from behind...**

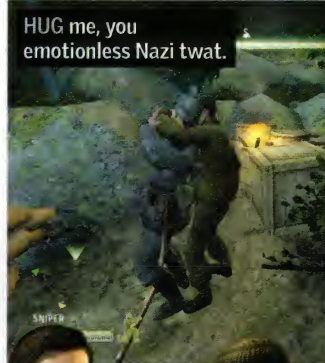
csf.pyrostudios.com | ETA: Spring 2006

**WORLD WAR II**, Nazis, World War II, Hitler, Hitler, reference the moustache, make a joke about holidaying in Poland, World War II, small amount of peas, Hitler, Nazis, reference the goose-step, *Fantastic Four*, optional *Fawlty Towers* quote and there's your intro.

*Commandos Strike Force* is, in the simplest sense, an attempt to drag the *Commandos* series out of the isometric strategy-based WWII gameplay of old and into a full-on first-person shooter, balancing both the stealthy tactics of the original games with the all-out action we've come to expect from the FPS genre.

Almost every element from the past three games has been included, from silently murdering the Nazi hordes with nothing but light feet and sharp daggers to stealing enemy uniforms and tossing endless amounts of coins to distract guards. Even the series' character-swapping antics are present, with the ability to switch between your spy, sniper and Green Beret with nothing more than a deft slap of a key, the game's AI grabbing the reigns whenever you're not around. Obviously, the success of such a feature depends on just how competent the AI will be – whether or not your spy starts garrotting your sniper and flicking coins at sheep the moment you're not looking is something this game might very well hinge upon.

With some missions requiring you to remain undetected and others placing you in the middle of huge skirmishes (aided not only by the Green Beret's bullet-absorbing American charm, but also by the sniper's ability to momentarily slow down time, cough), it's unclear how well the two gameplay styles will sit together, or whether the original's features will merely feel tacked-on. But one thing's for sure: Hitler; Hitler; World War II; didn't see a banana until 1950; Hitler.







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# SIGNING YOUR LIFE AWAY

I spy with my little EULA, something beginning with trouble...



**Reporter**  
Pavel Barter

**S O WHO HONESTLY** reads a game's End User License Agreement? It's that random post-installation screen,

at the bottom of which every month millions of us tap the 'I Agree' button without dwelling on the consequences – partly because all that legal jargon is more confusing than a Parisian roundabout, and partly because we can't wait to get stuck into our spanking new game. But beware the small print, people, for it can burn.

Signing any contract without reading it first has potentially disastrous consequences, such as breast implants on your forehead or your immortal soul ending up in the hands of Satan. Although such clauses have yet to emerge in either *Half-Life* or a *Quake*, disregarding the EULA (also known as the 'shrinkwrap' or 'click-through') can get you royally screwed.

*Star Wars Galaxies* fans learned this when Sony Online Entertainment

made sweeping changes to its game just days after a new expansion pack was released. "The new changes have been forced upon our community," says George Williams, an administrator at the lucasforums.com site who had previously fawned over *SWG* for up to three hours a day. "We weren't consulted about them at all. The community is angry, and rightly so having wasted two years grinding, then having our status stolen..." Angry words indeed, and words that will get angrier should the rumours of the game being dumbed down for a console release ring true.

## JOBLESS JOBSWORTHS

Like coalminers in Thatcher's Britain, many *SWG* players are now unemployed and unwanted. Rangers, scouts, and creature handlers are extinct; while credits, skills, guilds and equipment have mysteriously vanished. "Bio-engineers lost all their stuff. It costs a lot of in-game money, which SOE hasn't replaced!" wails Williams plaintively.

The painful truth is, SOE's Jedi mind tricks are protected by the EULA. "Developers could turn *Star Wars Galaxies* into *Pac-Man* tomorrow if they wanted and we wouldn't have a leg to stand on, even though we have paid hundreds of pounds," another former *SWG* fan fretted on *PC ZONE*'s boards, proving that the Force is about as effective as a spud gun against the Dark Side of 21st century law.

Consumers are the bitch and the EULA is their daddy. Some click-throughs contain 'don't blame us' clauses just in case the software buggers up your computer, others warn you not to 'criticise this product publicly' (sorry, *Angel Of Darkness*, but you're still shit). Meanwhile, others announce that by 'signing this contract, you also agree to every change in future versions'. Argh! Who wished this evil upon us?

Chris Bennett, a videogame and intellectual property lawyer at Davis & Company, a law firm based in Canada and Japan, explains: "The purpose of

## SOFTWARE LICENSE AND LIMITED WARRANTY

PLEASE READ THIS LICENSE CAREFULLY BEFORE INSTALLING OR USING THE SOFTWARE. BY USING THE SOFTWARE, YOU ARE AGREEING TO BE OUR BITCH FOR ALL ETERNITY. IF YOU DO NOT AGREE TO THE TERMS OF THIS LICENSE: DO NOT INSTALL OR USE THE SOFTWARE, DELETE THE SOFTWARE, PUT IT INTO AN AIR-TIGHT CONTAINER AND BURY IT IN A FIELD.

The computer software, artwork, music, and other components included in this product, as such may be updated (collectively referred to as the "Software"), are the copyrighted property of us. The Publishing Gods from upon High. We own and/or control all copyright, trade secrets, patent and air you breathe. You may use the Software on a single computer. You may not: (1) copy (other than once for back-up purposes), distribute, rent, lease or sublicense all or any portion of the Software; (2) complain (3) deny us your first born child.

I Agree: ☐ "Skip to the end..."  
I Disagree: ☐ "I'm calling my lawyer"



COULD this dragon win your soul?

Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)

@ letters@pczone.co.uk  
✉ pavel barter, pc zone,  
99 baker st, london, wlu 6fp





## Under their thumb

Read the small EULA print or else...

## The game you bought has changed, but you can't get your money back. What a way to treat your customers

George Williams reaction to Sony's changes to *Star Wars Galaxies*

game EULA's to restrict what gamers can do with the games after they're installed (eg, no reverse engineering or modification), confirm who owns the copyright and limit game companies' liability."

### I AM THE LAW

Break a game's EULA and prepare to be thrown to videogaming wolves. In March 2005, 1,000 *World Of Warcraft* subscribers were booted off the servers for farming gold to other players for real-world money. A few months before that, Blizzard won a court case against a group of gamers who released a free emulation package called *Bnetd*, which gave players increased control over channel names and account attributes.

Most MMOG EULA's are stricter than a Germanic dominatrix, although *Second Life* prides itself on offering orgiastic levels of freedom. "We allow users to retain copyright in the works that they create and upload to *Second Life*," explains Linden Lab's Gene Yoon. "Because of our user-created content, our service offering is more like an Internet service provider than a traditional game provider, and our terms reflect that. We don't prohibit the trading of virtual items for value and we provide terms to facilitate the trading of virtual currency use for real money."

But what happens when EULA's themselves cross the line? Recently, a few *World Of Warcraft* players complained that they were unable to play second-hand versions of the game because their authentication key didn't work. Yet this apparently contradicted a clause in the game's EULA that granted players 'the ability to transfer the [game's] physical property'.

Even more disturbing are terms of service agreements, which allow

invasions of privacy. In 2000, an *EverQuest* upgrade screened player's computers for 'hacking tools'. The rumbled developers were left red-faced, scrapped the tech and begged the forgiveness of their subscribers. More recently, Blizzard was at the centre of a whole storm of controversy when it allegedly used *World Of Warcraft*'s terms of use agreements to sneak spyware, a programme known as The Warden, into its game.

Despite Blizzard's grumbles that the hidden program wasn't so bad, Greg Hoglund (co-author of *Exploiting Software, How To Break Code*) says that The Warden "opens every process on a gamer's computer, from email programs to privacy managers, and sniffs email addresses, website URLs open at the time of the scan and the names of all running programs." Ever get the feeling you're being watched?

Given EULA's potential to screw up your entire life, their enforceability "varies from country to country", according to lawyer Chris Bennett. "Many courts will uphold EULA's, while others won't hesitate to ignore licence agreements and online terms that are unexpectedly harsh or onerous. The easy way to reduce this risk is to avoid putting such terms in online agreements. But that's hardly any fun, so another option is to notify customers of them. This will increase the chances that the terms will survive a judge's scrutiny."

### CONTRACT KILLING

In other words, publishers should make it clear what we're signing up to – not only via pages of baffling legalese, but also in simplified terms for us dopey gamers whose experience of contracts is limited to murdering people in *Hitman*. "There's nothing worse than slogging through



ARE we breaking the law printing this?

#### Sanity: Aiken's Artifact

Users pledged not to upload... Any portion of the game to the Internet'. In other words no screenshots, no fansites and a game no-one remembers.



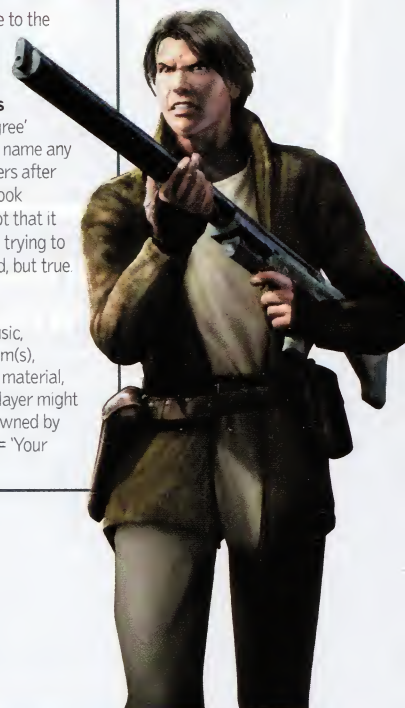
#### City Of Heroes

Dear COH, 'I Agree' not to create or name any of your characters after famous comicbook superheroes. Not that it stopped Marvel trying to sue anyway. Sad, but true.



#### EverQuest II

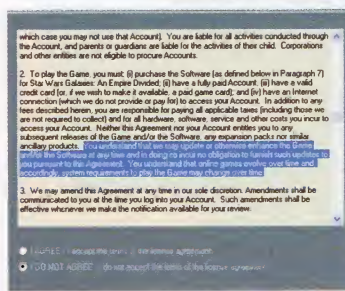
'All artwork, music, character(s), item(s), coin(s) or other material, or property, a player might accumulate is owned by SOE.' 'I Agree' = 'Your ass is mine.'



someone's 50-page game publishing agreement full of cross-references and run-on sentences," says Chris Bennett. "The same is true for EULA's, although it's more important for a EULA because the gamer won't be hiring a lawyer to review it for him or her."

The controversy over *Star Wars Galaxies* rumbles on like an angry cold sore. Almost half the community has scarpered and more plan to leave once their account expires. "The game you bought has changed, but you can't get your money back. What a way to treat your customers! My server (Infinity) is like a ghost town," explains George Williams, who's started a 'Win Back The Community' campaign.

In the future, pissed off MMOG subscribers could prove disastrous for publishers. A gamer's loss of time and money could theoretically result in damage claims against a company, raising a bigger question: what would happen if a publisher scrapped an MMOG altogether? Until then, it's advisable to trawl through as much of the EULA as possible before signing your life away. Ignore it and, who knows, your immortal soul may be toasty warm for a long time to come. **PCZ**



JUST imagine the monster is SOE.



# THE SHAME GAME

Will Porter unveils the ten most gut-wrenchingly awful moments of recent gaming history...

**W**E'VE GOT TO the stage in which excessive violence, blatant misogyny and wilful wrongdoing no longer raises an eyebrow in gaming. Decapitation, massacre, breasts that you could secure scaffolding in... We've seen a lot. An awful lot. So it takes a special sort of game to make you place your head in your hands and weep bitter tears of embarrassment. But you can't bite your lip forever. Here are ten moments from recent PC gaming that made *PC ZONE* chew their keyboards with their terrible, terrible banality...



STILL don't know what the straps are for.

## 01 Prince Of Persia: Warrior Within

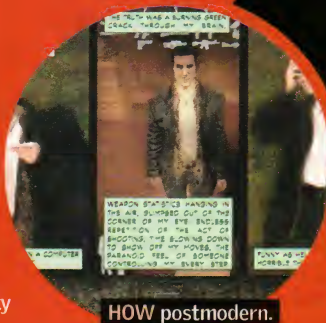
**Gratuitous early-game presence of buttock**

As if to underline, firmly and in red biro, that *Warrior Within* was an entirely different kettle of (now sexy!) fish from *The Sands Of Time*, this is what we were presented with as the game booted up. An arse, a leather-garrotted arse, of a sexy pirate sauntering like an Eastern European callgirl into the fray. "You bitch!" shouted the Prince. "You dream-destroying tosspots Ubisoft!" we shouted back. Before playing the rest of the game and quite enjoying it.

## 02 Max Payne

Clever clever-dickery

We let old Max get away with a lot; all that, "you'd find that Lady Luck was really a hooker, and you were fresh out of cash" may have had its tongue in the right side of its cheek, but was still pretty silly. Nowhere near, however, as mind-deadeningly crass as the section that sees Max sky-high on Valkyr and convinced that he's trapped inside a graphic novel, and then a computer game. Because he is! He is! Do you see? Do you see? ARGH! Remedy we love you, but... But... Argh!



HOW postmodern.

## 03 Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory

**Fisher can kiss girls with no qualms**

When you're a highly-trained secret operative protecting the world from global terrorism, utilising expensive secret military gadgets and stretching your legs very far apart, you need to make sure your nasal cavities are clear at all times. That's why Sam Fisher uses Airwaves, to ensure he can breathe easy no matter what situation he's in. This is such an important fact about Sam that we're reminded of it in almost every cut-scene in *Chaos Theory*, sometimes with full-screen establishing shots of the menthol-chewing gum, and sometimes with subtle appearances of it, well, everywhere. After all, there's nothing like a misplaced sniffle to alert a bored sentry.



TRY to look her in the eyes.

## 04 Vampire: The Masquerade - Bloodlines

**Random boob movement**

"What are you doing darling?" "I'm just playing the unfinished, yet highly acclaimed *Vampire: The Masquerade - Bloodlines* sweetie." "And who's this?" "This is Jeanette, she's a really, really dirty minx!" "Right. Why is her right breast twitching uncontrollably?" "I don't know sweetie. Maybe it's because of the physics." "You're not doing it then?" "Nope, not me." "Are you going to watch Coronation Street with me? It's on in a sec." "Yes dear."

## 05 The Curse Of Monkey Island

Hang on, he's an American?

You waited with baited breath. Another *Monkey Island* game! What could possibly go wrong? Well, they could take the funniest icon in PC gaming and go and give him an American accent. And not even a good American accent. One of those smug, know-it-all ones that you'd normally find selling exercise bikes to fat women on cable TV. Fact: only Brit voices can be snide and nice at the same time. LucasArts, we liked the game, but we'll never quite forgive you. Although obviously, that's a bit easier these days.



WHY the long face Guybrush?



## 06 Black Hawk Down

Rewriting history with Uncle Sam

If it's crassness on an international politics scale you're after, then look no further than *Delta Force: Black Hawk Down* from NovaLogic. Not only content with reducing one of the most brutal and violent civil wars of the modern age to a sub-par arcade shooter with US marines scything down generic wave after generic wave of black-skinned clone soldiers, it then added further insult to injury with a truly cringe-worthy 'bonus' mission. In real life, the tyrant warlord General Aidid was killed during a series of inter-clan fighting. In the *BHD* version (a game mostly on sale to a US audience remember), Aidid was the target of a covert ops US Ranger mission to ensure that the good old stars and stripes always wins out in the end. Two words: Viet Nam.



## 07 Judge Dredd: Dredd Vs Death

Gives you wings. Even if you don't want them...

He may be the law (and his game might not have been very good), but he certainly didn't like Red Bull – his publishers did though, as they got lots and lots of money from it. Red Bull is apparently illegal in Mega City 1, but it isn't illegal to have it shoved in the face of the gamer EVERY FIVE PIGGING BASTARD SECONDS. Whether it's crushed by Dredd's Lawmaster in the intro, or stacked in crates in the docks. We haven't touched a drop since.



## 08 Doom 3

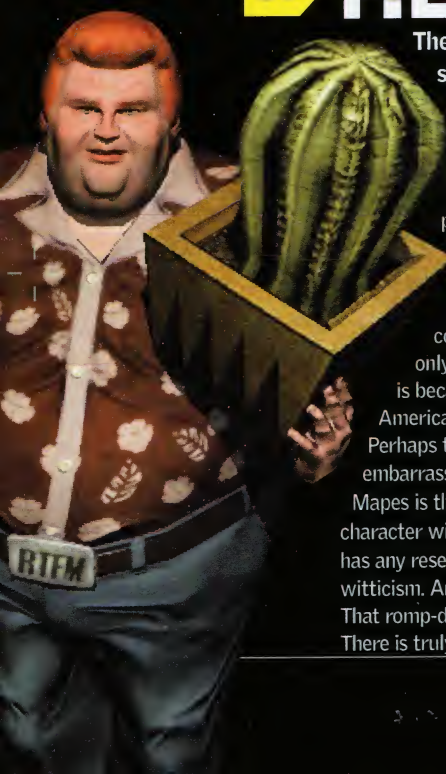
Bwahahahahaha! Cackle! Cackle!

What is it about those who dabble in Satan's business that makes them so easily entertained? All it takes to prompt Betruger's bizarre caterwauling is for you to be walking down a slightly dank corridor or tip-toeing over a nearby tendril of hell. Is hell filled with nitrous oxide or has Betruger honestly got so little to do with his day that he has to resort to giggling through the spectral intercom every five minutes to make himself feel important? Either way, it makes us cringe.

## 09 F.E.A.R.

The worst Norton since the Antivirus

What. Were. They. Thinking? You're in the middle of creating a supernatural screamer packed with excellent AI and all manner of visceral goodness – and then you stick in a comedy fat man? Whose only reason for being there is because he's fat and eats American variations on Wotsits? Perhaps the single most embarrassing thing about Norton Mapes is that he's a comedy character without a single line that has any resemblance to a joke or witticism. And as for that music. That romp-di-pomp music. Jesus. There is truly no hope.



## 10 Any Games With Overly British Accents

*Call Of Duty 2*, we're looking at you sunshine

Do they really think we talk like that in the States? I mean, we're not huge fans of the plucky plum-filled voices that chirrup "Yes, my liege!" in RTS games either, but every time you hear a cheery voice yelling "Potato-Masher!" or "Jerry Wankers!" in *Call Of Duty 2*, doesn't a tiny part of you die inside? But it's not just statesiders at fault here: even our own precious Lionhead Studios added to our nation's acute sense of embarrassment, with Cornish accents in *Fable* that shamed bumpkins everywhere. "Awww... Chicken Chaser... Look at the chickens run!" The name is arse-face actually. Get out of my way, I've got lost chapters to find.







THE THRILL OF THE BILL

# SWAT 4: THE STETCHKOV SYNDICATE

**Will Porter tools himself up to fight crime, then runs around a building shooting walls and dying**

DEVELOPER Irrational Games PUBLISHER VU Games WEBSITE [www.swat4.com](http://www.swat4.com) PREVIOUSLY IN... 162

## THE LOWDOWN

Neatly designed new SWAT levels for fun and frolics ☒

Nips, tucks and more streamlined gameplay ☒

New guns and upgraded electro-shock treatments ☒

SWAT 4 engine is a bit creaky ☐

**A**S THE WORLD'S least competent SWAT player, within ten minutes of booting up the long-awaited expansion pack I had shot myself in the head with my own sniper. I had my sniper window open on-screen, I went into a shadowy room, my sniper saw a dark figure moving around suspiciously, I jabbed Caps Lock to take control, I fired, I

died in a pool of blood and the hoodlums who had taken over the dilapidated arcade I was in the process of liberating lived to be naughty another day. Not entirely what you'd call recommended procedure. Nor, indeed, was the messy incident in which I accidentally shotgunned a snappy woman in the face while fumbling for my handcuffs.



"GAME over punk!"

In short, now that *The Stetchkov Syndicate* has rumbled around the corner of computer gaming, nothing seems to have changed in terms of my utter ineptitude. I remain the sole victim of two-thirds of my own flashbangs: the Stinger is invariably he who shall be stung. Then again, having had a mash through work-in-progress code for the *SWAT 4* expansion, there isn't much change there either; it's just as fun and just as challenging, but certainly not far removed from what went before.

It's a collection of excellent maps set in predominantly believable locations with a few intriguing twists, a new weapon or item unlocked as you march through the levels, some porky hostages and some rewarding gameplay tweaks that dim the prominent interaction fiddles you came across in *SWAT 4* vanilla version 1.0. In addition, obviously, there's even more developer in-jokes plastering the walls of the expansion's various homeless shelters and rock venues – has any other game had more development staff photos gurning from posters and wall furniture? Answers on a postcard...

## HOT SWAT

Not wanting to pre-empt the review too much, but there are some truly excellent maps here. Pride of place goes to the Ministry of Agriculture, which some rather

ETA  
Feb  
'06



THE STORY SO FAR...

# IRRATIONAL GAMES

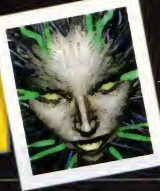


**Dark project**  
Irrational is created as an offshoot of Looking Glass Studios. There is much rejoicing.

1997

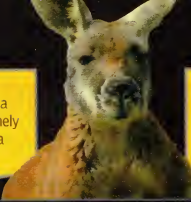
**Shodan sophisticate**  
System Shock 2 is released. There is much rejoicing and a little dancing in the streets.

1999



**Upside down**  
Irrational opens up a studio in the extremely dull city of Canberra in Australia.

2000



**More banging**  
Following SWAT 4's success, the Australian office busy themselves with the expansion pack.

2005

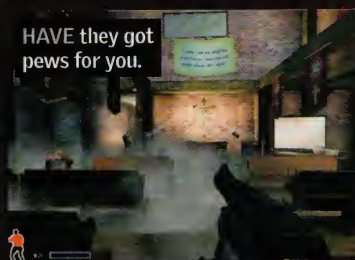
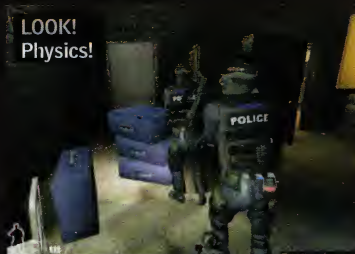


## The excellent new maps make for a scintillating experience, with potential danger in every conceivable direction

angry farmers are intent on exploding. My bumpkin dad usually just sends angry letters or kicks the dog – Americans apparently tool up with AK47s.

There are three floors of carnage here, with bleeping bombs in random places and one bomb that's already gone off – meaning that the building is hollow in the middle, extremely dark and has a basement car park that's knee-deep in water. It makes for a scintillating experience, with potential danger in every conceivable direction, made all the more nerve-jangling by a vamped-up interest in centring levels around large open spaces with multiple entry-points.

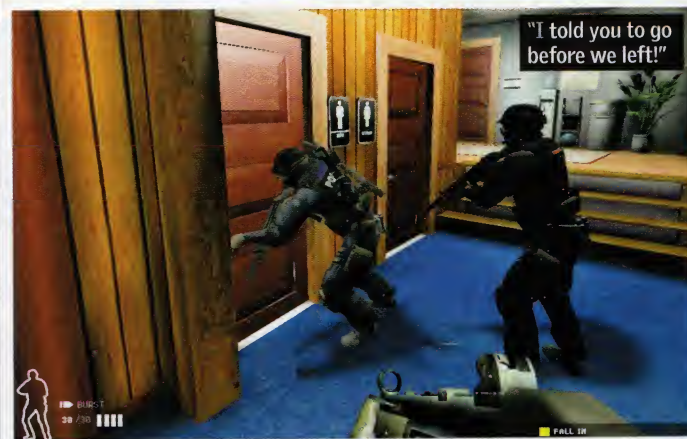
These cavernous locations prompt outright fear in every true player (inept ones especially), and after intense bouts of play can cause trepidation even when visiting large non-game rooms, such as those in out-of-town retail parks. Not that we'd recommend imagining you were tooled up with weapons in the JJB Sports retail outlets, it's just something that happens sometimes. But in this expansion, open areas such as rock venues, chapels and large rooms with open balconies on either side are more common than ever, always containing a heady mix of plebs, hoodlums and flashbang flare. Because of this, they demand careful planning, expert marksmanship and a large helping of luck.



Thankfully though, there's a new feature here to help you – meaning that you can stack up your red and blue teams at different doors to cavernous areas before giving a simultaneous 'Go!' signal. True, you could get fairly similar results last time around, but it came through frantic key presses and a distinct feeling of being rushed. The new 'Held command' system feels as if you're commanding a well-oiled machine: calm and meticulous. Until you rush into the fray and headshot your own man as he sprints towards you from the

## Would You?

Increased player-count points to success of the police recruitment campaign



opposite side of the room. Once again: guilty as charged.

Intriguing level design aside, Irrational really seems to have paid rapt attention to criticism levelled at SWAT 4. That said, at this stage of development we're not particularly convinced that all its remedies will be pulled off.

For a start, the press blurb promised a story that dealt with a criminal organisation (the titular Stetchkov Syndicate), but in practice you'll only ever notice this if you're one

Multiplayer tomfoolery, the much-vaunted and often much-ignored holy grail that sits on the edge of every single, solitary disc of SWAT 4, has also been prodded in necessary areas. Instead of the cacophony of five different monotonous SWAT voices that used to greet the start of every co-op match – 'Go here!', 'Go there!', 'Check under that door!', 'Have you fed the dog?' – there's now a sole leader, rather than four people who assume that they should be viewed as dictator-general of crim-chasing. Then again, if you're using the now built-in co-op VOIP system, there's nothing you can do to stop your more eager teammates from yapping like a corgi on heat – apart from, perhaps, a well-placed electrical current. With a number of co-op players that now maxes out at a colossal ten, and a 'Smash and Grab' mode that's a bit like the former VIP escort game, but instead sees both teams scurrying around for a briefcase that's presumably been left lying around by MI5 or a Tory leadership hopeful, community bods will be happy indeed.

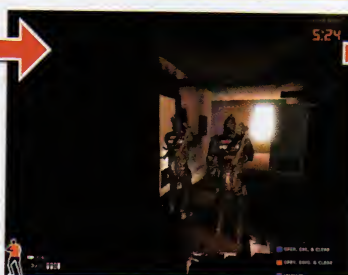


## Charging Rooms

Red and Blue teams battle for simultaneous incursive action plaudits with a nifty new command structure that allows commands to be held until the fabled 'Go go!' gold code is given



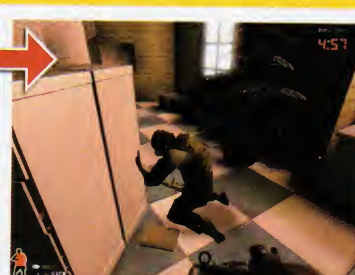
**ON MY FIRST WHISTLE:** Here, the plucky blue-two have been given a Held command to chuck in some tear gas and rush in. They're very excited.



**ON MY SECOND WHISTLE:** The reds are going for a flashbang manoeuvre: being blinded by magnesium and phosphorus is very in this year.



**FANCY SEEING YOU HERE:** Turns out the open-plan office is pretty barren, no need for all these heroics after all. But wait, what's that coughing sound?



**CAUGHT BLUE-HANDED:** It's one of those pesky agricultural terrorists, and his eyes seem to be burning. A victory for the blue team, then.



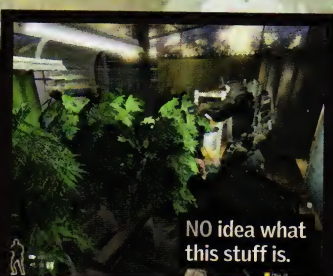
**NITROGEN.** The true gas of criminals.

FALL IN



SWAT teams can go through any door they like. Rules be damned.

GRECH & CLEAR



NO idea what this stuff is.

of those nerdy spods who read every second line of the mission blurb instead of choosing your gun and diving straight in. Stetchkov missions only start appearing come level five, and even then it's hard to notice – although, in all fairness, Stetchkov remains a cool name.

## Now everyone likes shooting electric wires into whining bystanders



IN-JOKES abound.

The same drive has presumably gone into weaving a bit of added character into your fellow SWAT flunkies – 'I think I brought someone here on a date once,' 'Was it a blind date?', and other such rib-ticklers. All pleasant enough, but perhaps filling the gaps with a tongue-clenched-between-teeth chunky crayon rather than a dainty, refined set of colouring pencils. Still, it's a work in progress, which is something that, again, we should reiterate when pointing out that it's fine introducing a couple of 'physics objects', but perhaps not when they're in the *Tribes: Vengeance* variety of bounciness and suggest that

we're skulking through a drug lab on a secret moon base. Still, time will tell.

## ELECTRIC BOOGALOO

Now, everyone likes shooting electric wires into whining bystanders when they refuse to get down on the ground (before you put them down!), and there's no feeling quite like giving a team-mate a cattle-prod moment in the derriere. So imagine my joy when I first discovered the Cobra stun gun – a dear little creature that not only has springs capable of zapping two sequential grannies, but also works in melee mode should you be up close and personal.

It's just one of the unlockable additions in the *SWAT 4* urban outfitters collection that open as you work your way through the levels of the expansion. Elsewhere, the boring (ammo pouches) mixes with the excessive (grenade launchers you can pack with stingers, tear gas and the like), and the intriguing (blurry night-vision goggles) rub shoulders with the gleefully flesh-shredding (5.7 x 26mm sub-machine-gun).

All this, and you can drop glow-sticks to mark where you've been (or recreate one of

those legendary late '90s SWAT raves, should a level have access to a field), and punch perps in the head with your fist should they act shabbily when expected to comply with your wishes.

Some may argue that a lot of the new gameplay options weaved into the *SWAT 4* website are things that should have been in the original game anyway, rather than a particularly 'expansive' approach. However, from what I've played, the quality of the levels invariably exceed its forbear in style, substance, setting and imagination.

After all, it's not often that I want to be a policeman, but apparently there's more to it than standing outside nightclubs and asking fat, drunk bald men to calm down. In fact, if I was a policeman, I'd try to tazer someone everyday, perhaps even twice a day. I'd imagine you'd have to fill in some forms and such to say who you'd tazered and why ('He gave me a funny look', 'he was holding a shotgun', 'he was standing outside Dixons'), but it certainly seems to be a great perk of the job. Roll on *The Stetchkov Syndicate* review code, and roll on *SWAT 5*. **PC**



# LET THERE BE LIGHT!

**National delight in *PC ZONE* giveaway results in token comedy feature!**

**ARE YOU IN** the dark? Are you having difficulty reading this? Are you sitting anywhere in the vicinity of a USB port? Can you not be arsed to get up and walk across to the light switch to flick it on? Would you rather be in the dark, seeing as you're doing something private, but wouldn't mind a little bit of illumination while you're at it? Well, ask

repetitive questions no more! With your new and free USB light (worth £6.99), there's no stopping you! It's exclamation marks all the way!!!

That's right, this month the benevolent gods at *PC ZONE* have smiled upon you. You lucky, lucky sod. But exactly what uses does your new handy USB light have? Perhaps it's time for an in-depth *PC ZONE* investigation...



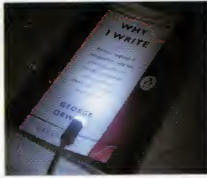
THE light fantastic.

## Build A Scary Monster



If you've bought two copies of *PC ZONE*, or simply work for the magazine and have a box of USB lights under your desk, you can use two of them, a marker pen and a beige cup out of a vending machine to create a scary monster.

## Read A Clever Book



If you're a clever person, you may want to read something that stimulates your cleverness. Darkness hinders this, so simply plug your light into a nearby USB socket and read away, slowly stroking your chin as you do so.

## Pretend To Be A Famous DJ



Drug-takers and those who enjoy rapid dancing may like to pretend to be their musical idols, popular beat-combo rhythm outfit Orbital. Switch on iTunes or WinAmp to complement your fun with a pounding bass line.

## Read A Dirty Book



If you think that reading is for nonces, then you might want to look at pictures of sexy ladies instead. Darkness hinders this, so plug your light into a nearby USB socket and read away.

## Carry Out A Medical



Should a loved one have an itchy or painful ear, nose or (let's be grown up about this) anus, then cast a bit of light on the subject with a handy *PC ZONE* USB light – worth £6.99! It'll cut your medical bills in half!

## Terrorise This

*War On Terror* reaches Canterbury. Sunday service unaffected

[www.digitalreality.hu](http://www.digitalreality.hu)

**DEEP SILVER MUST** be pretty confident with *WOFOR: War On Terror*, simply because if it's rubbish then our obvious summary line would be *WOEFUL: War On Terror*. It speaks volumes, then, that we're using this brilliant gag in a news piece, since the game itself looks quite tasty.

As well as little RTS men dashing through obvious places like Basra, *WOFOR* has gambled on a few locations that are a bit closer to home. Tanks will be rumbling through the streets of Canterbury and angering the archbishop, while jeeps will be dashing through the streets of Paris making assorted Frenchmen re-adjust their neck-onions and say "B'of". Thirty missions featuring

real-world weapons, real-world vehicles (terrorists drive VW Bay Window camper vans just like the Iranians do in the *Back To The Future* movies) and real-world tactics, sort of, should perk up interest after developer Digital Reality's largely lambasted last effort, *D-Day*.



JUST another day on the streets of Paris.





ACTUAL photo of Hill catching air. (Not doctored.)



# TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND

**ETA**  
Jan/Feb  
'06

Tony Hawk is the world's sickest skateboarder. *Steve Hill* is just sick

DEVELOPER Neversoft PUBLISHER Activision/Aspyr WEBSITE [www.th-american-wasteland.com](http://www.th-american-wasteland.com)



JUST look at that ultra-relaxed body stance. Nobody move OK?

**I**N THE RAREFIED world of pro skateboarding, Tony 'The Birdman' Hawk is undeniably the man. Bringing skating to the masses, he has personally invented over 80 tricks, and – after five years of trying – became the first man ever to pull off the fabled 900. That's five 180-degree turns, maths fans. Despite retiring from competition in 1999, Hawk is still the popular face of the sport, and of course the phenomenally popular videogame, now in its seventh incarnation. Not bad for sliding around on a plank on wheels.

Game number seven is entitled *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland*, and he's

come to a patch of uniquely British wasteland to promote it, bravely swapping the West Coast for West London. Sandwiched incongruously between the Trustafarian chic of Ladbrooke Grove and the antique dealers of Portobello Road sits the BaySixtySix Skatepark. I hear it before I see it, with the half-term squall of board-riding chavs drowning out the traffic passing overhead on the famous Westway.

Finding the entrance, I announce that I'm here for The Hawk, and am wordlessly ushered in. Spotting a blonde throng of PR, I make myself known and swiftly get the cheek-kissing duties out





"MOVE along, fat boy."

## What's the worst that can happen? Broken pelvis? Fractured skull?

up a rickety ladder for a gawp. And there he is, sweating like a beast in heat while being interviewed by a Sky camera crew.

Up close, Hawk looks much older than in the games, and there is an argument that this is no way for a grown man to spend his time. As if to directly counter that argument, he embarks on a series of tricks that at this distance are frankly stunning. It's frightening enough simply being this high up, let alone launching yourself down a vertical ramp on a plank and spinning around like a whirling dervish in knee-length shorts. Spins, flicks, tricks, he's got it all, and the crowd are suitably awed.

### BALLS-UP

He's probably barely stretching himself, but nevertheless he pushes it slightly too far and makes a horse's arse of one trick, tumbling to the ground in a mess of flailing limbs. The pain on his face seems genuine – either physical or psychological – as he hauls himself up for what must be the umpteenth thousandth time.

Scooping up his board, The Hawk has clearly had enough and barges through the crowd toward his dressing room. Seizing the opportunity, I swiftly follow him and wangle my way in by posing as the photographer from *The Daily Star*. By posing, I mean actually taking their photos, for free.

It buys me a few minutes though, and I ask Tony how he found the ramp. Resisting the opportunity to say he turned left at the tube, he surprisingly claims: "This is really small." Apparently, Tony's used to 13ft and not the 10ft out there. The UK isn't a compete loss though, as "in Surrey, there's a really good ramp".

As for how I should get started skateboarding, he looks me up and down and says: "Just on the mini-ramps." So it's not too late for me? "I hope not. I'd like to think not," he tells me.

Wary of my brittle bones, I ask about the injuries he's picked up. "Sprained ankles and wrists," draws The Hawk. "Like, the worst one was when I

fractured my pelvis, broke my thumb and fractured my skull, like, all at once. But the pelvis was the hardest."

So you'd recommend staying in and playing the game? "As opposed to that move I tried, yes."

### ON RAMP

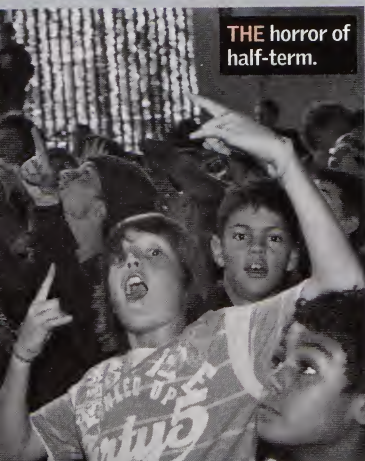
With The Birdman's words still in my ears, I borrow a skateboard and make my way to the top of a mini-ramp. Clambering onto the board, I lean back to counter-balance my gut and stare into the void below. It must be a 2ft drop, with an angle of probably 45-degrees. As I compose myself, a queue of confused schoolchildren begins to form behind the fat man. What's the worst that can happen? A broken pelvis? A fractured skull? A broken thumb? All of the above?

Launching myself down the ramp, I soar majestically into the air, performing an incredible 540 with tail grab, landing it perfectly to the rapturous roar of the crowd. Then I get up off the sofa and make myself a brew. **PCZ**

### HOW REAL IS... AMERICAN WASTELAND

Coming to PC soon, we can only vouch for the console version, in which you rock up in Hollywood to be a pro skater and dress up like an idiot (that bit's realistic). All the obligatory tricks are there, and doing them is a simple case of memory and manual dexterity. Nothing like the real thing then, which requires much courage/stupidity, co-ordination, skill and a tolerance to hospital food.

**PCZONE**  
**3/5**



THE horror of half-term.

of the way. Taking an impromptu seat, the pleasantries are barely under way when a loud clatter announces the arrival of an airborne skateboard. As if in slow-motion, it glances off the back of a PR woman, who luckily manages to take the momentum out of it, thus saving your correspondent from yet another Reality Check-related injury.

Somewhere among the morass of flying boards and screaming kids is The Hawk, and I'm here to find him, interview him, and, if possible, have a go on his board. I've already been told that he won't be doing an interview with *PC ZONE*, as, with TV crews and national press circling, we come somewhere beneath *The Framley Examiner*.

### SKY'S THE LIMIT

Naturally, I take this edict not so much as an instruction but as a challenge, and set about stalking my prey. The biggest ramp in the park would appear to be the obvious starting point, so I elbow my way past the ankle-biters and clamber



THE Hawk and Hill.  
Wicked, man.





# COMING SOON...

SHADES of Morrowind.

# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ONLINE: STORMREACH

**Paul Presley** used to be the dungeon master, but now he prefers the submissive role

DEVELOPER Turbine PUBLISHER Atari WEBSITE [www.ddo.com](http://www.ddo.com) PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 151

## THE LOWDOWN

Dungeons	✓
And dragons (presumably)	✓
Online no less	✓
Instant adventure zones	✓
Nerrrrrrds!	✗

**W**HILE MOST MMO developers are at pains to describe how widespread and open their virtual worlds are, Turbine is taking a different tack with *Dungeons & Dragons Online: Stormreach*. Here, the focus is on adventuring around the city of Stormreach, with quests to be found behind every door.

We recently ventured into the beta test and after some initial head-scratching, early quests showed simple signs of the way you'll be expected to do more than just kill things, with plenty of levers, switches, traps and narrative text descriptions setting the mood.

## SLOW GOING

Another interesting twist is the way that experience works. Rather than rewarding your character with a few numbers every time another monster goes to his grave, experience is only

awarded at the end of a quest and is made up of completion bonuses, loot collection and other factors predetermined by the adventure's creator. The idea is to reward role-playing, taking the emphasis off killing everything you see and shifting it towards using your character's abilities to reach the end of the quest instead.

Unfortunately, while mechanically it's ticking all the right boxes, it's yet to capture that classic pen-and-paper, friends round the table 'spirit' of D&D. You can see what Turbine is trying to do with the use of dungeon master-style descriptive text and instances that contain a little more than just monster-bashing, but it's going against the established nature of MMO gamers. Which is to basically ignore all the fancy frills and just dash through encounters as quickly as possible, twatting everything they

see and grinding up those levels ASAP. Players, eh?

We had an idea recently that a more accurate interpretation of D&D in an online world would be to allow player 'dungeon masters to create adventures in the style of *Morrowind TES* or *Dungeon Keeper*, granting them experience points the more adventurers traverse their dungeons, and opening bigger and better construction tools as they go. It would be an interesting twist on the whole PvP thing anyway and a damn sight more fun than Alliance vs Horde. Just a thought, Turbine. You can have that one for free.

Anyhow, what *DDO* currently contains is an interesting approach to the established MMO norms, if not a revolutionary departure. Whether that is enough to forge a new front remains to be seen, but at the very least it's looking set to provide a solid diversion from your time in Azeroth. **PC**

**ETA**  
Spring  
'06



## WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...

**New Objective**  
Find the fifth Wizard's Stone near a Rest Shrine

### TELL US A STORY

Live dungeon masters are replaced with pre-scripted narratives like this, which are designed to keep you thinking you're in a thrilling fantasy novel. We'd rather have a dwarfish baldie in a red robe step out from behind bushes though.

- Find the first Wizard's Stone in a chest atop a platform ✓
- Find the second Wizard's Stone in a barrel ✓
- Find the third Wizard's Stone in a chest beyond a flooded hall ✓
- Find the fourth Wizard's Stone in the Conjured Spider's room ✓
- Find the fifth Wizard's Stone near a Rest Shrine

### CHESTS OUT FOR THE LADS

Loot is automatically assigned to each member of your party, avoiding arguments about who gets what, and stopping anyone from nicking everything of value while your back's turned.

Breathing heavily, you crush the life from the last Conjured Spider.

### AN ONGOING TALE

Each adventure will be more than just 'kill X number of rats'. With constantly updating and changing objectives, *DDO* is designed to feel like a proper adventure rather than stock-keeping with a sword.

### THRUST, THRUST, PARRY

Combat is also different from most MMOs, being a combination of twitch and auto attacks. Manually swinging your sword/mace/pants is said to be more effective than letting the AI do it. Unless you're a cack-handed fool.

### DICE MAN

What would D&D be without funny-shaped dice? The engine does all the work, but traditionalists can still get the thrill of watching numbered dodecahedrons tumble if they wish.

Conjured Spider 20  
Critical Hit!



PROMISES to be better than the cartoon series.



The focus is on adventuring round the streets of Stormreach, with quests to be found behind every door





# THE PROFESSIONALS

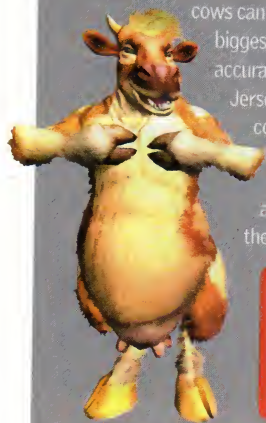
Uncovering the lies and slander perpetuated by PC gaming

**ARE YOU A** pedant? Do games ever wind you up with glaring inaccuracies? If you are, then that's why we've created a regular feature geared towards chastising games for their obvious misdoings. This month, we've clearly just got Will to ring his Dad, but quite frankly, if you had contact with the

Sheep Farmer of the Year 1986 (or indeed any other year), then you'd be a fool not to use him in a comedy feature like this. This month, we're dealing with farmyard animals; an issue that may pass over the head of the man on the street, but truly **MATTERS** in PC gaming.

## BLACK & WHITE 2

"Despite a lot of townie thought to the contrary, female cows can have horns. This is certainly the biggest I've ever seen, the colouring is accurate and the breed is probably Jersey. It appears anatomically correct, although its stance is somewhat unusual. I would add, however, that the teats are a bit chunky. I'm not a fan of the golden back feet either."



**PCZONE**  
★★★★☆  
Not that bad at all



## FAR CRY

"I can't believe that my son is showing me this picture, with the understanding that we're dealing with farm animals. This is a white warthog, and as far removed from being a classic British pig breed

as is possible. Quite why Will has chosen to send me some African jungle creature rather than the Large White pigs that his family made their name from for so many years escapes me. It's standing quite realistically though, and I suppose its hairs look quite real."

**PCZONE**  
★☆☆☆☆  
Not a proper pig



## CALL OF DUTY 2

"Now that's very realistic, that looks just like a dead horse. I'll admit that I've only ever actually seen one dead horse, but it looked exactly like the horse in this picture. The colouring is very, very good - as is the sheen on his coat. And it's also exactly the sort of horse you'd expect to find in wartime Normandy - you wouldn't expect a sleek racing type horse to be working on a farm, they would all be muscular working horses like this. It's a very sad picture but I'm really impressed with it. The company's obviously done its research."

**PCZONE**  
★★★★★  
An excellent dead horse



## BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD

"Compared to the last one, this is awful. It looks like a toy plastic horse that you'd buy for a two-year-old girl. I'm not overly keen on the tack that it's wearing either - and quite why it's wearing blinkers in its stable is up for question, but then I'm no expert in that area. Whereas the *Call Of Duty* horse was dead, it still had more life than this sorry state of affairs. Also, if the maker of this game think it's an accurate stable, then it'll be disappointed there as well. There's no straw, food, tack or anything anywhere. It really is an unremitting failure."

**PCZONE**  
★★☆☆☆  
BIA accuracy shocker!



## WORMS 3D

"I'm told that this is from an older game, but that's no excuse. It looks more like a Labrador dog or a poodle than a lamb. Whoever drew this cartoon has never seen a sheep. The legs bend the wrong way, the ears go the wrong way, the eyes should be on the side of the head rather than the front. It's pretty much an insult to sheep farming. God knows what this game is about, but I'm quite glad to have been told that it's been packed with TNT, hopefully it will take out its parents and whoever made them breed with it. Not good at all."

**PCZONE**  
☆☆☆☆☆  
Terrible. Just terrible.

**WINNER: Call Of Duty 2** Amazingly, a dead horse has managed to take the plaudits. Congratulations to Infinity Ward, commiserations to the dead horse.



## WE WANT YOU! YES, YOU!

We want you! Yes, you! If you're currently employed, or have been employed, in any of the below fields, then you could help us in our new, beautiful, The Professionals page. Please contact us on [theprofessionals@pczone.co.uk](mailto:theprofessionals@pczone.co.uk) and we will make magic happen!

**We want people accustomed with:**

Handling or treatment of toxic waste • Manufacture or design of crates • Manufacture or design of barrels • Study of biochemical or biological terror risks • Manufacture/design of assault courses • Manufacture/design of toilets • Spaceships  
**Could it be you?**

## THIS MONTH: FARMING

**Expert:** Charlie Porter  
**Job:** Farmer and Will's dad  
**Company:** Ralph Porter and Son  
**Specialised Pedantry:** Misrepresentation of farmyard animals in games







# DESPERATE MEASURES

BACK To The Future III – the game!

Strangers say 'Howdy' in a gruff manner in *Desperados 2: Cooper's Revenge*

www.spellbound.de | ETA: 2006



KEEPING the retro dream alive.



CHICKENS mean an extra five per cent in a review.

NOW **COMMANDOS** HAS gone all FPS on us, we need someone to keep the dream alive. Someone to keep the isometric flag flying at 30-degrees (despite having a 360-degree camera). Step forward bounty hunter John Cooper, proud Stetson-wearing

Wild West hero and bastion of 'click here while the sentry isn't looking' tactical gaming.

Admittedly, you can now nip into a third-person view (hack, spit), but guiding the assembled Old West heroes through various arid villages, forts, wagon trails and

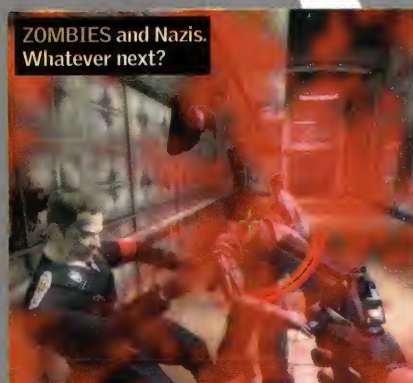
Wild West towns is looking like a slice of rare old-school pleasure. With new character and token axe-bearing Native American Hawkeye in tow, it's a niche title that could do justice to a setting that's been assaulted by the mediocre since the day that games began.

# Nazis in zombie terror shock!

Breathtaking new shooter mixes Third Reich with undead

www.cdv.de | ETA: Q2 2006

IN A **SHOCK** twist to the FPS genre, a run-and-gun game is being developed that suggests Nazis involved themselves in sick scientific experimentation on soldiers, in effect turning them into super-soldiers, while also creating Nazi zombies. *UberSoldier* sees you playing as a super-soldier who's rightly miffed that he signed up for a scheme that involved him being killed, then brought back to life as a killing machine. Will it be any cop? Who knows. But, other than zombies and Nazis, what's better than shooting a zombie Nazi?



ZOMBIES and Nazis. Whatever next?

# THE MAN WHO KNOWS



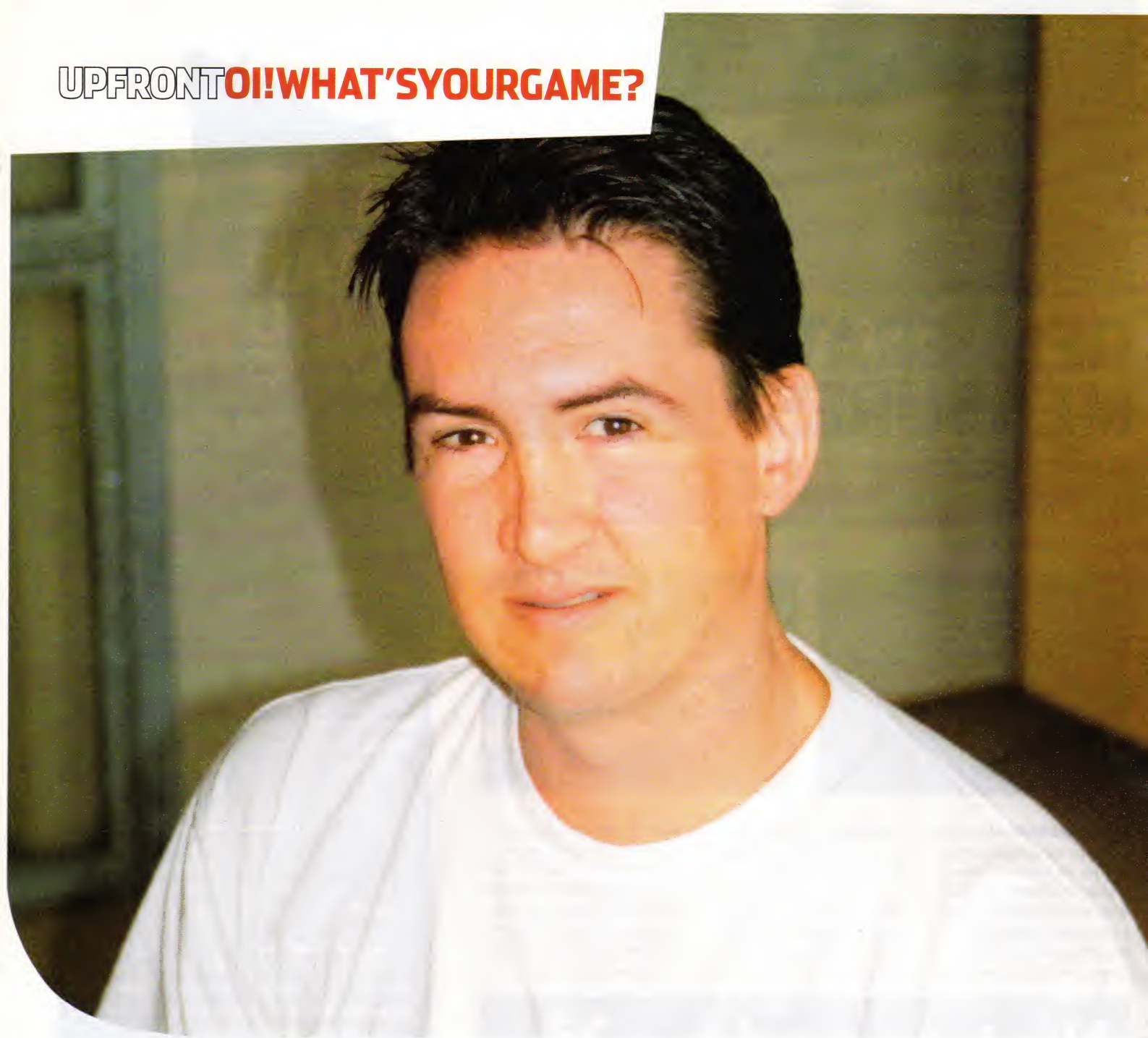
The budding **Christian gaming scene** has two **exciting** new heroes (other than the obvious **main man**) in the form of *Timothy And Titus: Saints, Martyrs, Heroes*. The game follows the chuckling twosome, disciples of Saint Paul no less, throughout the 3D action-platformer lands of early christianity – converting and frolicking as they go. With a full cast of **possessed** men, **possessed** wolves, drunken pagans and pharisees, christians everywhere are **chomping at the bit** to compare their skills and discover who among them really is **'holier than thou'**. With power-ups that include faith, hope, love and prayer, developer White Knight forcefully underlines that there is to be no violence. Such deeds simply do not fit within its christian gameplay paradigm. Saint Timothy, who was **beaten to death** by a howling pack of **drunken pagans**, was yesterday unavailable for comment.

*Call of Duty 2* players, for a **long time** suspected of being fans of both creaky '70s sit-com *Citizen Smith* and Trotsky, have rebelled. Perhaps **flush** with brotherly love and **righteous indignation** from the game's Russian campaigns, servers across the world have agreed on a day-long international shutdown of servers and a general downing of tools in the face of the **wrath** of Activision and the might of Infinity Ward. Their gripe? Why, only the non-inclusion of Punkbuster and **general shabbiness** in support for the chosen online shooter. The reaction to this perversely bloodless revolution? One extremely rattled publisher. **Power to the people!** All hell can't stop us now.

The **sick and reprehensible** online craze of MMOGing, that of fantasy creatures frolicking in woodland in the presence of elderly and infirm goblins, has spawned its own website [www.mmorgy.com](http://www.mmorgy.com). "People are turned on by different things. Men **like** to play as women. Women **like** to play as men. Both of them **like** to play as vampires, furies, masters, slaves, doctors, patients and a multitude of other roles," explains the site. Men and women everywhere are now claiming that no-one had checked with them about their alleged **furry fixation**. Lawyers have been called in, but they don't know what furies are either.

**"With a cast of possessed men, drunken pagans and pharisees, christians are chomping at the bit to discover who among them is holier than thou"**





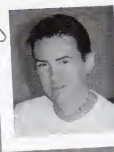
# STAHL!

## WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

*Will Porter* grabs the creative director of *Full Spectrum Warrior: Ten Hammers* and prods him until he squeals

### Who are ya?

**PANDEMIC**



**NAME** William

Henry Stahl

**DEVELOPER** Pandemic Studios

**POSITION** Creative director of the *Full Spectrum Warrior* franchise

**AGE** 38

**GAMES WORKED ON** *Full Spectrum Warrior, Battlezone, Battlezone II, MechWarrior, Hyperblade*

**FAVOURITE GAME** *Robotron 2084*



**Q** How did the concept for *Full Spectrum Warrior* first come about? Only, it's a sort of game that we'd never really seen before...

**A** *FSW* began life as a training aid for the US army back in 2000. Basically, the army was looking to leverage the talent and expertise of the videogame industry to create a training aid that was more interactive and more cost-effective. They had very specific needs for the game, which pushed the design and technology in a very different direction to convention. In that respect, it was the US army that really forced us to rethink the squad-based videogame genre.

**Is it still used for military training?**

To my knowledge, the original army version is still being used, and we're still in contact with several representatives from the army who are interested in doing subsequent training aids. Our relationship really came about by coincidence. At that time, Pandemic was pitching around this military strategy game – based on the *Dark Reign* engine – and a mutual friend who had army contacts heard about the pitch and put us in contact with them. Of course, the game had to change somewhat to function on a console (it was originally a PC exclusive proposal), but the majority of the ideas in that original pitch found their way into the finished product four years later.

***FSW* prides itself on realism.**

**Can you explain the process of development that takes the thoughts of military specialists and places them within the game?**

It's very difficult to create a game that attempts to be as true to its real-world subject matter as possible. In a traditional game, you're completely free to envision any situation or ability you want. With a game like *FSW: Ten Hammers*, you always have to check to be sure that the ideas you come up with are true to how the army actually operates. Our military advisors are heavily involved very early in development. They ensure that our features and mission structure are authentic. Once we enter production, Subject Matter Experts (or SMEs) become less involved in day-to-day production. By then, we only check with them when features need to be modified, or new ideas change the direction of the overall game.

**Do you ever get feedback from soldiers currently serving**

**in Afghanistan or Iraq who play your games?**

We've gotten a tremendous amount of positive feedback from soldiers that have played both the army version and retail version of *Full Spectrum Warrior*. If there was one common thread in all the feedback we receive, I'd say it was a general thanks for focusing more on the soldiers as a team, as opposed to individual heroes.

**What's *Ten Hammers* bringing to the *FSW* experience that wasn't present in the first game?**

We approached *Ten Hammers* with several goals. First, we wanted to add more replayability to the game. Second, we wanted to give the player more choice and more tools to play with. Last, we wanted to tighten up certain areas of the first game that we felt were too gamey and undermined immersion in the experience. The game has expanded in so many ways, it would be hard to list them all here. Probably, the largest addition to the game is the new versus multiplayer component. Now, in addition to single-player and co-op campaigns, you can also play against other gamers online.

**Is the new game set in the same fictional area as before?**

Yes, the game takes place in the

**With *FSW: Ten Hammers*, we wanted to add more replayability and give players more choice**

country we created called Zekestan. We wanted to present a different look and feel this time around, so we moved the setting of the game from the south to the north of the country. The art director based much of the conceptual design of Kardiman on Kashmir.

**How are you going about making levels less linear?**

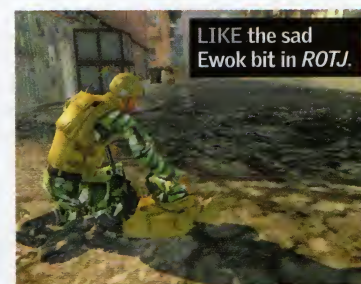
Probably the biggest change players will encounter is that the enemy forces are now randomly generated and also AI-controlled. This means that every time you play a mission, the same enemies won't always appear in the same locations, and they won't always do the same things every time. Also, now that our enemies are more aggressive and less predictable, the pacing of the game has really sped up – it's a much faster game now.

**And what's next on the *Full Spectrum Warrior* radar?**

We're just focused on finishing *Ten Hammers* right now and getting that to our fans. After that, the only plans we're making are where to spend some well-earned vacation time. **PCZ**



RED sky at night...



LIKE the sad Ewok bit in *ROTJ*.



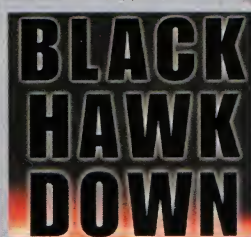
MILITARY posers.



*TEN Hammers* is set to be hard as nails.

## WILLIAM STAHL

### Where he turns for inspiration...



**BLACK HAWK DOWN:** The book was influential on the first *FSW*, making it true to modern warfare.



**WAR MOVIES:** Stahl's dad adores war movies, and *FSW* is aimed at just such people.



**MACHINE HEAD:** Fresh from the *Black Hawk Down* movie score, this lot were snapped up for *FSW*.





**NOT NEW ORLEANS**

Again, this isn't the city of Dubya's worst nightmares, this is simply somewhere that looks a bit like it. In the Deep South. It's the home of one Margeaux Le Blanc, the heiress of a vast fortune whose wedding day Agent 47 just happens to be attending. Who has to die? How will they snuff it? Who knows, but remember that there are plenty of alligators out and about if you know where to look.

**COLD HARD CASH**

Now, standing here with a sniper rifle isn't exactly subtle, it's more for the need of a pretty screenshot. In the game proper, you're rewarded for your lack of discovery – reward money being governed by just how much you're noticed. This is a revamp that the *Hitman* series has been crying out for, actively encouraging stealth and tidy storage of bodies with in-game mechanics rather than simple prestige. Since 47 doesn't seem to need food or shelter, the cash gets spent on weapon upgrades and bribes.



# HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

DEVELOPER Io Interactive PUBLISHER Eidos  
WEBSITE [www.hitmanbloodmoney.com](http://www.hitmanbloodmoney.com) ETA 2006

**W**HERE IS AGENT 47? Well he certainly isn't in New Orleans. Oh no, no. At least, he was up until recent events – but then the action switched over to *another* place in Mississippi where they celebrate Mardi Gras in a *very similar* way. Never mind though, since everyone's favourite bald, serial-killing clone is now surrounded by more potential victims than ever. The hundreds of characters that can be cast on-screen means that *Hitman* will finally get realistic nightclubs, rather than the 15 people shuffling in a dark room of games past. So little time, so many bodies to stuff in closets and clothes to dress up in...

**ALL THE LONELY PEOPLE**

Innocent, shuffling pedestrians always come off badly in gaming these days – and considerable time in the development of *Blood Money* has gone towards creating crowds of 'em, each one apparently a potential victim. Quite how this will work in the game mechanics proper is currently unknown, but expect greater freedom, bigger levels and more plebs than ever before.



A screenshot from the video game Hitman: Blood Money. Agent 47, a bald man in a dark suit, is shown from the chest up, holding a silenced pistol. He is standing on a balcony with an ornate metal railing. In the background, a large, glowing red devil mascot with horns and a mischievous grin is visible. The scene is set at night with city lights and a full moon in the background.

### HE TALKS TOO

Now 47 has always been the quiet, brooding type – it goes with the turf. But in keeping with the heightened interaction and characterisation of *Blood Money*, you'll be a lot more vocal than before – chatting with bartenders and hotel staff. Meanwhile, the next day's newspapers will also report on your forays into assassination, perhaps mentioning how said bartenders and hotel staff were later found dead in a bin.

### BUSINESS AS USUAL

Graphics may be glitzy, but the same old *Hitman* interface remains. Yes – 47 is now better at hanging off stuff, jumping, climbing and pirouetting from balcony to balcony – but the rudiments of his control system remain pretty much the same. A shame, perhaps, because the somewhat clunky interface has always defined the firm line between the *Hitmans* and the *Splinter Cells* of this world.



**PCZONE  
CHARTS****ChartTrack**

- 1 — **FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006**  
Issue 162 90%
- 2 **NEW** **BATTLEFIELD 2: SPECIAL FORCES**  
Issue 163 80%
- 3 **NEW** **AGE OF EMPIRES III**  
Issue 162 84%
- 4 **NEW** **CALL OF DUTY 2**  
Issue 162 91%
- 5 **NEW** **THE MOVIES**  
Issue 162 95%
- 6 **NEW** **CIVILIZATION IV**  
Issue 162 92%
- 7 ↓ **THE SIMS 2: NIGHTLIFE**  
Issue 161 58%
- 8 **NEW** **NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED**  
Issue 163 88%
- 9 ↑ **THE SIMS 2**  
Issue 147 82%
- 10 **NEW** **HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE**  
Issue 163 73%
- 11 **NEW** **STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II**  
Issue 163 61%
- 12 ↓ **ROME: TOTAL WAR – BARBARIAN INVASION**  
Issue 160 88%
- 13 ↓ **QUAKE 4**  
Issue 162 84%
- 14 ↑ **THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY**  
Issue 153 57%
- 15 ↓ **F.E.A.R.**  
Issue 161 90%
- 16 ↓ **WORLD OF WARCRAFT**  
Issue 152 95%
- 17 — **BATTLEFIELD 2**  
Issue 157 94%
- 18 ↓ **BLACK & WHITE 2**  
Issue 161 93%
- 19 ↓ **X3: REUNION**  
Issue 162 92%
- 20 ↓ **ROME: TOTAL WAR**  
Issue 148 93%



**1 FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006**  
Fending off every single, solitary rival for the pre-Christmas *ZONE* chart crown is *Football Manager 2006*, the plucky football game.



**5 THE MOVIES**  
"And just like the movies we play out our last scene," sang Alien Ant Farm back in 2001. And even though they remain shit, *The Movies* is still great.



**2 BATTLEFIELD 2: SPECIAL FORCES**  
Every game ever made in which you can slide down wires has been ace. Now *Battlefield 2* joins their ranks.



**6 CIVILIZATION IV**  
Those tricky Roman bastards are still tormenting us, although it's probably our fault for playing *Civilization IV* on ever more difficult settings.



A race even your nan could win.

HASN'T got any stars though.



A monster-mash, yesterday.

# SPEED GARAGE

I like driving in my car...

www.codemasters.co.uk | ETA: February 2006



PLUS go-karting! Just amazing!

**ANY SELF-RESPECTING** motorsport fan should be salivating at the mouth by now thanks to the impending might of *TOCA Race Driver 3*. Avoiding the *Colin McRae Rally* route of simply updating the title and adding extra mud, the team has been hard at work on some pretty substantial improvements.

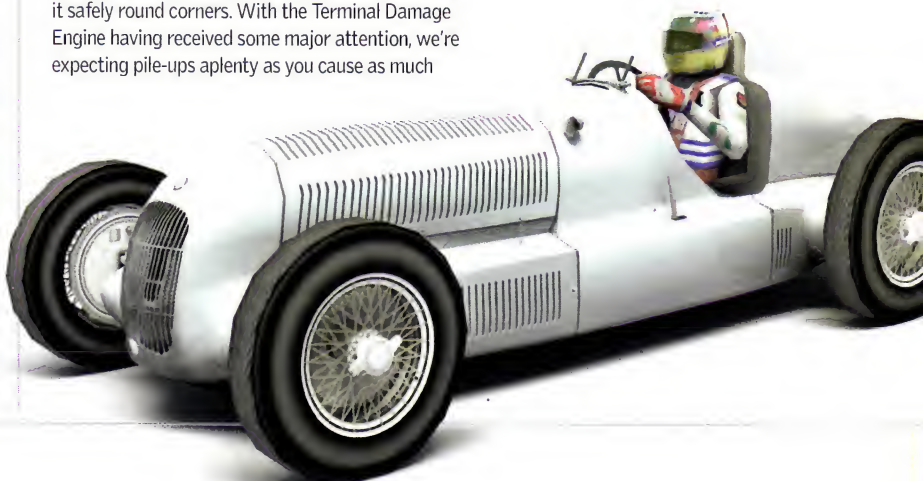
For a start, the addition of race rules will please the realism lovers out there, making for a more true-to-life experience, though making life a bit more difficult for those who tend to use opponents as buffers to get round corners. That said, the newly improved AI is much less likely to shunt you off the track, so maybe it won't be so bad after all.

As far as damage goes, Codemasters is among a select handful of developers who have cottoned on to the fact that most people seem to find destroying their ride almost as enjoyable as piloting it safely round corners. With the Terminal Damage Engine having received some major attention, we're expecting pile-ups aplenty as you cause as much

carnage as possible, just so you can witness the visual feast of destruction.

Masses of new motorsports have been added, upping the total from a measly 33 championships in *TRD2* to way over 100 in this latest version. Among the new entries are such bizarre additions as wheelie-pulling monster trucks, legendary Group B rally cars, fast and frantic go-karts and Honda lawnmowers, which look like electric wheelchairs but, unfortunately, won't actually cut the grass if you stray off the tarmac. Realism indeed!

Never mind though – with this host of new features and a predecessor that was one of our favourite racing titles of 2004, it's pretty much a dead-cert winner. No sign of a complimentary *TOCA* calendar with nekkid girlies all over it just yet though. That'll be coming next week we guess.





## IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

# The Slave to Realism

STUART WHITE - PRODUCER ON RAINBOW SIX: LOCKDOWN

Having started out in healthcare IT, Stuart White ditched the caring profession for a life in games a fair few years ago. Now the producer on *Rainbow Six: Lockdown*, he's spent seven years working on Tom Clancy oeuvres. He's also an avid photographer.

**Q Why is the authenticity of the weapons so important in a *Rainbow Six* game?**

**A** It's vital, because the series is based in reality and we want to try to educate the player - give them the opportunity to have fun through the realism, letting them know how real-world weapons work. When you shoot you've got your eyeball and you've got your finger, those are the two ways you interact with the world. It's completely different on your PC, with your mouse and your keyboard, so it's all about translating that real-world agility of shooting into a game.

**There are 42 weapons in the game: how do you go about choosing which models of which guns end up in the game?**

We listen to players whenever we release a *Rainbow Six* game. We get a ton of feedback each time saying, "Hey, why didn't you put this weapon in?", or "I've shot this weapon and you guys definitely need to have it!" So we keep track of that, but we also have a design team in-house. There are two guys on

the team right now who are ex-military, and they haven't shot all 42 of these weapons but, well, they've shot their fair share. So they're bringing their real-world experience into it and we feed off that.

**Are those guys actually military consultants, or are they designers who've been through the army?**

They're designers who've been through the army, they've had some training here and there. We've got one guy at Red Storm who isn't actually on this project but who used to be in the military police, so he comes with a lot of real-world experiences. The other guys go out at the weekends and they play - not paintball - but this version called Airsoft, where you shoot plastic BBs. They have, last time I spoke to one of them, three of the weapons from the game themselves. They're pretty hardcore about it.

**How do you go about recording the sounds of the guns?**

The sounds we're using in the game came from a while back when we

joined up with a company in California called Sound Deluxe and actually did a shoot. We've got footage of them going out to the rifle range, we gave them a list of the weapons that we wanted sounds for and they just had a blast going out there and recording it. They had all their super-high-powered microphones and basically went out to a hillside in California, shot them and got the sounds for them.

**What's your favourite weapon load-out in the game?**

Right now it would probably be the assault rifle class. Sub-machine guns are a little bit lighter and let you home in on your target a little bit quicker, but the power behind the assault rifles are definitely my favourite right now. I like shooting a guy in the leg and watching Havok take over as they slide across the floor; so that's the assault rifles right now.



## LIVING IN A MATERIAL WORLD

Christmas came, the goose had been getting fat, goodies were placed in the PC ZONE hat. But we don't want them! We're offering them to you, in exchange for precious beer money - and the ESC Gaming charity. The PC ZONE Totalizer is flashing ominously, it seems to want more money. So prepare for some impressive bidding. We're on eBay with the tag PCZoners whenever you notice new issues of the magazine on the waist-high rack in Marylebone station newsagents. Buy our crap, make a child happy.

Buy our tat at [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)  
All proceeds go to charity, mate...  
[www.entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org](http://www.entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org)



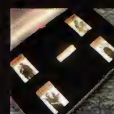
### THIS MONTH'S TAT



**UFO: AFTERSHOCK BLUE T-SHIRT**  
Turn-based clothing has never been so sexy.



**CALL OF DUTY ZIPPO LIGHTER**  
Inscribed with the words 'Colonel Paul Presly' (sic).



**MAX PAYNE 2 CUFF LINKS**  
Couldn't really make it up, could you?



**DIRTY GT LEGENDS CALENDAR**  
Some rough ladies, with corresponding dates.

### THE TAT BOARD

COMPARE	ITEM TITLE	SOLD FOR	BIDS
	<b>COMPLETE SERIES OF PC ZONE ZX MAGAZINE</b> For four quid you've been mugged - we'll send you something nice as well...	£4.00	6
	<b>CHRONICLES OF NARNIA HIP-FLASK</b> We're sure CS Lewis would have approved. Enjoy being drunk!	£25.00	15
	<b>F.E.A.R. T SHIRT</b> Not a bad price for such a natty item of clothing. Warning: when ladies see it they will want to do sex with you.	£5.50	3
	<b>WARCRAFT BOARDGAME</b> Now that's a number that makes the PC ZONE totaliser more than happy! Enjoy your boardgaming, you charity-loving loon!	£36.00	14



**COMING  
SOON...**

# THE GODFATHER

**"Who is Don, and why is he so important?" wonders Will Porter...**DEVELOPER EA Redwood Shores PUBLISHER EA WEBSITE [www.eagames.com/official/godfather/godfather/us/index.jsp](http://www.eagames.com/official/godfather/godfather/us/index.jsp) PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 159**THE LOWDOWN**More than a cheap  
GTA cash-inClever touches with  
controls and interactionTo answer your first  
question: yes, we  
have pasta.

Hey! I love pasta!

Not for grumpy  
movie-obsessives**ETA  
March  
'06**

**S**OMETHING TO PERK up your interest: "First things first. This is heavily inspired by *Mafia*," *The Godfather's* creative director Philip Campbell outlines in his enthusiastic Irish burr, practically answering our first question. So let's not get caught up in the *GTA*-isms, what Coppola thinks or whether or not Brando is in it (which he is). Beyond the mission structure that has your random joe interacting with the Corleone clan, we've just been fairly taken aback by the way your everyday life as a gangster is set to play out.

Y'see, there are 150 shops in the game whose owners you can intimidate into paying you protection, and 100 racketeering opportunities where you can muscle in on gambling, drinking and whoring establishments the city over.

To intimidate these butchers, bakers, candlestick-makers and pimps, you can start off by smashing up his gaff – throw

a pedestrian through the shop window, take a baseball bat to the display cases or slam the shopkeeper's face into the till. All the time, the pressure on the NPC will be building; press the right buttons and he'll be in your pocket, push him too far and the place will be shut down for a week of game-time as punishment.

**ROUGH TREATMENT**

The really cool stuff, however, is the way that you're interacting with your inferiors while turning up the heat. Holding down your two main mouse buttons will have you grab the unfortunate in front of you; pushing forward on the mouse will shove them into walls; and pulling back will raise your fist in a threatening manner.

In this way, while tapping the spacebar and barking dialogue into the poor NPC's face at will, the entire shakedown procedure is made real through mouse movement. A swing to the right and a left-click will let you throw people across

roads and into moving traffic, tapping the WSAD keys provides headbutts, punches and uppercuts relevant to your positioning. It's a complete inversion of generic PC controls, yet it works well, culled from the controls of EA sports games like the *Tiger Woods* series.

This process of intimidation brings notoriety and cash to the fledgling gangster you've designed through the ever-handly EA hoodlum-haircut-o-tron character design system – but it's far from secure. In a *Risk*-style turf battle that persists long after the storyline proper has ended, four rival families will be firebombing and intimidating your own businesses. With a far more complicated and reactive system to the weak gang war sections of *San Andreas*, and with options that allow you to pay off cops to increase pressure on other families, it's yet another layer of long-lasting *Godfather* goodness that we weren't quite expecting. **PCZ**



WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...



OPEN ALL HOURS

Enter a den of iniquity, beat seven shades of excrement out of its bosses and you'll find yet another revenue stream. That means two things: free pool and a rival family who's been made more than a little angry.

DON'T HIT THE FACE

Fresh out of an EA character-creation facility, your character appears five minutes before where the film would ordinarily begin. Welcomed by none other than Brando himself, one day you may own this town.

SUPERMARKET SWEEP

You'll earn money from protection rackets, but obviously a lot of this protection involves taking a blunt instrument to goods, windows and floor staff. You'll never go hungry either, it appears.

BENT BOBBIES

In normal circumstances, this dutiful copper would blow his whistle and come a'running. Luckily though, this chap has been paid his weekly bribe and won't bat an eyelid to your sordid activities.

INTIMIDATIONS FROM ALL STATIONS

NPCs will automatically know your reputation, but most will need a shakedown before they bend to your will. Tapping the spacebar will have you snap insults at them, while moving your mouse will manhandle them into all manner of uncomfortable positions.



MR Ford Coppolla may not like it, but we're definitely warming to it.



Take a baseball bat to a display case or slam a shopkeeper's face into the till





UPFRONT ON

IT wouldn't be a zombie game without a chainsaw somewhere.

FEEDING TIME...

# STUBBS THE ZOMBIE IN REBEL WITHOUT A PULSE

Sam Kildsen loves zombies, but he couldn't eat a whole one...

DEVELOPER Wideload PUBLISHER THQ WEBSITE [www.stubbsthezombie.com](http://www.stubbsthezombie.com) PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 156

## THE LOWDOWN

- Kick off your own zombie apocalypse ✓
- Old-school action gameplay ✓
- Plenty of gore-drenched humour ✓
- Linear levels ✗
- Feels a touch consoley ✗

ETA  
Feb  
'06

**T**HE MOMENT WE got wind of the premise behind *Stubbs The Zombie*, we were sporting a grin to rival the Joker's. As premises go, this one's simple, straightforward and, well, just damn enticing: be a zombie, eat brains, make more zombies. Of course, there's a bit more flavour here and there, a few extra ingredients to this particular stew, but at the root of it, it's really all about being a shambling ghoul with his guts hanging out. Kudos to developer Wideload for coming up with it.

After an agonisingly long wait and a Stateside release, we've finally managed to get our mitts on some code – and we're happy to report that being one of the undead is pretty much everything it's cracked up to be. From the moment you step into Stubbs' tattered suit and hit the pristine streets of the space age (or rather

a 1950s idea of space age) utopian town of Punchbowl, the action comes thick and fast.

## MONSTER MASH

Stubbs has a reasonable variety of abilities at his disposal, with the game supplying new ones as you progress through its 12 levels. He begins with a basic melee move that can be used to kill the likes of civilians, cops, scientists and redneck hillbillies, who will then be resurrected as non-controllable but useful zombie followers.

However, his most valuable asset from the outset is the aforementioned brain-munching trick. Sneak up behind a foe, or stun them with a couple of punches, and Stubbs can grab hold of his or her noggin and feast on the warm matter within. Again, the victim will shortly become a zombie, and Stubbs will also receive a health boost,

plus regain other limited-use zombie skills that he may have depleted.

Ah yes, those other skills. In a pinch, Stubbs can bowl his head at a group of enemies, fart in their general direction or throw his own explosive insides around like bizarre hand grenades. The most interesting tool in his arsenal is the ability to rip off a hand and use it to possess adversaries (see 'Give Yourself A Hand', right).

The upshot of all this is that you wander around the large levels – which, despite the acres of space, are very linear – killing gun-toting humans while simultaneously raising your own disposable army of shambling green-tinged fiends. Now, this is enjoyable (how could it not be?), but it does get a bit samey, with most levels appearing to simply add a new background setting and tougher baddies rather than an actual fresh challenge. You'll be glad to know that





2003

2004

2005

2006

## Give Yourself A Hand

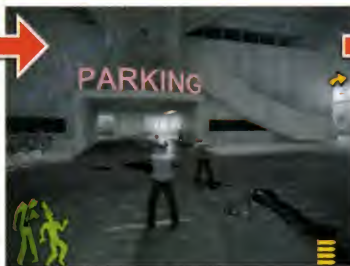
Need some extra firepower to get through a level?  
Rip off Stubbs' mitt and enlist an unwilling law-giver!



**POOR** old Stubbs. Without a gun, he's powerless against police brutality, Punchbowl-style. What to do?



**OF** course! Tearing off his left forearm with a deft twist, he hurls it towards the head of his attacker.



**THIS** is more like it. You're now in control of the cop, and can turn his revolver on his ex-colleagues...



...UNTIL they give him a taste of his own lead medicine. Ah well. Back to Stubbs we go.

## Stubbs can bowl his head at an enemy, or throw his own explosive insides around like bizarre hand grenades



DOWN on the farm.

Press "E" to exit tractor



**BRAINS** – a nutritious treat for all the family.

proceedings are enlivened periodically by a spot of vehicular action, boss fights and, at one memorable point, a disco dance-off mini-game, but basically it's pure zombie combat 90 per cent of the time. It's old-school and yes, it works, but don't expect a gaming revolution to hit your PC come this February.

That's not to say we found the preview code boring at all – in fact, the myriad humorous touches made even this burnt-out, sour-faced hack chuckle once or twice. Maybe even three times. We counted visual references to such cinematic classics as *Patton* and *Saturday Night Fever*, and the smutty shop names and radio ads, which take their cues from *Grand Theft Auto*, will appeal to the puerile little fool in everyone.

### MASTER CHIEFS

We also adore the visual style WideLoad has crafted out of the creaking shell of the now ancient *Halo* engine. What looked encouraging in earlier screenshots and

movies is even better when you actually play the game with its graphical settings turned up to the maximum. Everything is covered in a soft layer that gives it an appropriately grainy, vintage look (the closest thing we've seen recently is *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*'s night vision mode), while the levels themselves, although not the most detailed around, exude a lovely *Happy Days*-cum-*Flash Gordon* feel.

Stubbs himself is, unsurprisingly, the star of the show when it comes to the character models. The way his face glows as he takes a drag on his permanently-dangling cigarette (he's way past caring about health warnings) is just excellent, as

is his animation. Despite heavy console leanings, *Stubbs* is honestly shaping up quite nicely. Having ploughed through most of the 12 levels in an afternoon, we reckon it isn't going to be the longest of gaming experiences you have next year – but certainly the best one to feature a urinating zombie. **PCZ**



# Tycoon City: New York

**Steve Hogarty can't think of any more New York puns**

DEVELOPER Deep Red PUBLISHER Atari WEBSITE [www.atari.com/tycooncity](http://www.atari.com/tycooncity) PREVIOUSLY IN... 163

**S**TART SPREADING THE news: just when you thought we were fresh out of lyrical references and jokes about large fruit, we get our hands on *Tycoon City: New York* and are forced to squeeze some more puns out of the Big Apple. So erm, whassa-madda-you? And bada-bing. And gimme the money or I kill the broad. And also, have a look at how we fared trying to build Greenwich Village, home to the friends of *Friends* and birthplace of both Bill Cosby's and Barbra Streisand's careers.

**10:41am**

Luco has left, rather abruptly. Before he went, he explained how to upgrade my businesses. Each building can be upgraded in several different ways, each upgrade enhancing the building's appeal, beauty and satisfaction levels. Things like signs and billboards to drinks machines, trees and skylights all enhance and customise your buildings, making them more profitable. You have a limited number of upgrade points though, so distributing them evenly among your various businesses is important.



**11:03am**

Greenwich Village has now been formally introduced to me, and I'm told that it's full of no-good students. My first assignment is to please the students – an all-night Tesco won't do it though. These guys need a wide range of businesses to keep them happy. So I get to work building discount clothes stores, fast-food restaurants and Internet cafés near the university library, before building huge apartment blocks to house the swarming mass of *Dawson's Creek* extras. I miss Luco.



**10:32am**

BLAM! That's the noise of a tutorial starting, a noise that fills many with dread. Luco, a young, heavily-stereotyped New Yoiker, comes strolling out of a tenement building, full of confidence and explains the basics of camera movement and how to build a cworfee house nearby. It's actually a decent tutorial, and Luco (for some strange reason) isn't annoying, amazingly circumventing the New Yorkers' inherent condescending and patronising nature. Constructing a building is as simple as clicking an empty plot of land (Greenwich is oddly barren) and selecting from a vast range of buildings.



**11:40am**

Optional objectives and bonus prize objectives are coming at me from

all angles, and I'm beating them all down with my entrepreneurial prowess. Build a successful lingerie shop, make Washington Square Park beautiful, enhance the nightlife in a certain area – there's no shortage of things to do. I thought I saw Luco on the street, and chased him for a few hundred metres before I realised that it was actually two plastic bags tied together with a piece of string.



## 12:10pm

I've just built my first landmark, a great big church. Famous landmarks, such as Greenwich Church, exist as building sites, waiting for you to build them using landmark bonds, which are given to you for completing objectives. This means you can't build the Statue Of Liberty on Times Square, or stick the Empire State on top of the Chrysler Building, but it also means that your city will bear a vague resemblance to the actual New York. Right now, my city is beginning to look a lot more populated with huge crowds of people. There are no muggings or crimes, and strangely enough, no policemen either... Deep Red's utopian view of New York is unsettling.



ARCHES – invented by Romans.



## 12:12pm

Looked up Greenwich Village on Wikipedia... Why doesn't mine look like that? Well actually, my virtual Greenwich does look similar to some of the pretty pictures on the Internet. The Washington Square Arch is there, and my student apartments look exactly like the real ones – Deep Red's research team deserve a pat on the back. Wikipedia also tells me that in the 16th century, Native Americans referred to Greenwich Village as Sapokanikan. This makes me smile, as it's a funny word.



OUTTA the way!



I made this...

## 1:20pm

Halloween comes and goes, my rock club was a resounding success, but unfortunately it wasn't enough to convince the parade committee to drag their inflatable pumpkins down the street. I did a great job on the local park however, even getting an early morning news story all about how Greenwich citizens are grateful for me funding the planting of trees and strategically placing homeless buskers. They mercifully glossed over the fact that I ruined Halloween though – bless. I saw Luco, giving a tutorial to some other budding entrepreneur. I feel used and betrayed.



'CROWD Of Cawking Idiots 2006' was off to a great start.

## 12:48pm

Disaster strikes like a big snake-like thing with fangs: I've completely overlooked this year's Halloween parade, which Wikipedia informs me is the largest Halloween parade in the US, with over two million people coming to see it every year. I have two months to jazz up the parade route (as in, actually put some buildings there), and make the district happy. Never one to give up in the face of two million angry Americans expecting a show though, I get to work building newsagents, comedy bars and even a rock club along the parade route. Oh, and a locksmiths too. Something a bit different isn't it?





HUNTER HUNTED...

# PREY

The spirits of the ancients rise up inside *Will Porter* as he becomes the first ethnic minority in space...

DEVELOPER Human Head Studios  
PUBLISHER 3D Realms/2K Games  
WEBSITE [www.prey.com](http://www.prey.com)  
PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 163

## THE LOWDOWN

Taking the FPS and bending it into interesting new shapes



Doors that look like genitalia



Convincing ecosystem in a gigantic space sphere



Great treatment of gravity, vehicles and incessant violence



Your gran wouldn't like it



ETA  
2006

**H**ANG ON, REWIND. Did you just say that was called a 'sphinct-door'? "Yes, that's right." So called because it's a door with an uncanny similarity to a puckered-up sphincter? Because it looks like an arse? "Exactly." Really? "Yup." Really, *really*?

Creating a game that features doors that look like bums has clearly long since lost its novelty value on Timothy Gerritsen, the human head of Human Head Studios, but he at least seems aware that it'll be something for the grandkids to be proud of. He even manages to keep a relatively straight face as he takes *Prey*'s hero Tommy past a series of gashes in an alien wall that look suspiciously like lady-bits. A straight face that refuses to crack even when a malformed creature flops onto the floor out of one of them, gets shot about a bit and then attempts to fold back its previous home's meaty curtains with an avowed intent of nestling inside its moist innards to regenerate. Ladies and gentlemen! Boys and girls (of ages of 18

and over)! Welcome to the wacky world of *Prey*!

As you're no doubt fully aware, *Prey* is the reincarnated bedfellow of one *Duke Nukem* over at the formidable (if perpetually tardy) towers of 3D Realms. Once canned, now revived in vamped-up Doom-3-Engine-o-vision, it's yet another FPS treatment of an extremely familiar question. The question in hand being: 'What exactly happens if a Native American mechanic is beamed aboard the mothership of an alien invasion with a bird of prey (who's actually a ghost), while supernatural ancestral powers





HAVING a big gun for a hand makes simple tasks, like cooking or sewing, almost impossible.

are kicking off inside him at the behest of the spirit of his grandfather? The answer? Easily the most intriguing and original single-player experience of the year. And the first game to have arseholes as corridor furniture.

## HOOVER MOVER

Here comes the science part: *Prey* takes place within a Dyson Sphere. Which is a mass of collated material that hangs around a moving star due to gravity, physics, science and complicated things. For purposes of non-massiveness, Human Head has made its sphere as big as a substantial asteroid, which in Borg fashion drifts through space as an amalgam of technology and living biological matter (hence the fannies), with mischief and bloody sustenance on its mind.

"The Sphere goes from planet to planet, sucking people up and turning them either into food, workers or experiments that attempt to create a better breed of worker," explains Gerritsen, about ten minutes post-sphinct-door hilarity. "You meet survivors

from these different worlds as well as creatures who've become parasites – some things will attack anything, some things will come to you for aid, some things are just automatons working in the Sphere, while other creatures are actively working for the sphere."

So essentially, the Sphere is presented as a dynamic ecosystem, with its own food-chains, parasites, workers and hunters – yet also with a sentient voice (a Shodan-style female cut-glass Brit accent) who reacts to you as you progress through the game and go from one of many, many stranded abductees all the way through to a fully-fledged, fully-armed nuisance.

Turn a corner and you may come across Fodder, small turtle-like creatures who creep out of the walls and maintain the endless bio-corridors of the Sphere, following interesting AI routines that might lead them to do things like scrap over a human limb that's been left littering a corridor. Alternatively, you might come across Hunters (essentially the antibodies of the

system), blasting away above their heads at one of the jellyfish-like creatures who float around the sphere – gnawing at it with their acidic gastric juices. It's a lot like being inside the giant world-eating Unicron (as voiced by Orson Welles, fact-fans) in *The Transformers: The Movie*. The Human Head mission is to make you believe that you're one insignificant soul lost in a mammoth organism – although of course, you won't be entirely alone.

## CAN YOU SEE ME?

As well as the humans and aliens being farmed Strogg/Borg-style for batteries and new careers as ceaselessly working, wordless automatons (who, like the *Star Trek* residents of techno-beehive cubes will often ignore you unless you've made your presence known), there will be several races of creatures, whose planets have previously met unhappy ends, attempting to eke out a living in the Sphere. One group are called Hiders (because they're hiding – Human Head says what it sees) and will become a key part of Tommy's

## But is it art?

Celebrity US alien shock-jock recruited as voice talent



ART BELL: a smoking man to boot.

In our neck of the woods there aren't many mainstream avenues for good journalism about alien abductions: the *Sunday Sport*, *Fortean Times* and the occasionally more off-the-wall episode of *Jeremy Kyle* (who, while I'm at it, is shit and nowhere near as good as *Trisha*). The States, however, have Art Bell and Coast to Coast radio. Essentially airwaves dedicated to conspiracy theories and personal stories of the occult and extra-terrestrials (and often getting into trouble for its apparently valid 'Deep Throat' callers from Area 51 and their insistence that there was an alien craft just behind the Hale-Bopp comet), Art Bell is its undisputed call-in host star, and he's also been recruited for *Prey*. You'll hear his sultry tones emanating from scattered radio receivers throughout the sphere, updating you with the progress of the invasion on Earth. Who said journalism was dead?



## Walk this way Tommy is an Indian in high spirits



Now, there are a few games which allow you to leave your body vulnerable while psychically pressing forward into the level (*Psi-Ops* springs immediately to mind), but *Prey* is set to take this often redundant feature and meld it properly with gameplay. Leaving your body in a hovering Christ position and going on a Spirit Walk not only means that everything goes grainy and black-and-white, but also that your soul will be able to pass through forcefields while firing trusty arrows from your handy spirit bow. With these sorts of powers, it's amazing that the cowboys still managed to win all the time in the movies.



somewhat reluctant foray into world-saving and girlfriend-rescuing.

### SEEN IT BEFORE

So that's the set up. Now you'll probably be wanting a few reasons to be excited. The prospect of a *Doom 3* Engine game set in a quasi-space station with lots of drippy tentacles poking through metal grilles has perhaps set off a few alarm bells if you had disagreements with id's magnum opus. Well, fear not pilgrim. Since here, the wily developer is taking the dyed-in-the-wool and stretching the set-in-stone: bending the rubric of the FPS to make it a little less familiar.

A good example of this is Death Walk, an ancestral power of Tommy's that means you won't be presented with a 'Game Over' screen after death, but will instead be taken to the afterlife, a swirling plain above which (playing as your spirit) you can see your body slowly being sucked into the ether while you, armed with your trusty spirit bow, fight creatures whose demise will see you returned to the real world. No quicksave needed, no pressing urge to break up the gameplay, press Escape and create a savegame with a hastily tapped 'qwertywr' masquerading as a file name. Even though both features will be included: the developer may be innovative, but it's not stupid.

Another good example of innovation could perhaps be the bird. After all, how many other games have a built-in hint provider disguised as a spectral hawk? Very





THE STORY SO FAR...

# HUMAN HEAD



**Break Free**  
Human Head Studios is formed and sets up shop in Madison, Wisconsin.

**Found Vikings**  
Viking actioner *Rune* is released to fair-to-middlin' reviews. 3D Realms likes it though.

**Dead Man's Gland**  
Slightly hokey western game *Dead Man's Hand* is released; PCZ doesn't like it that much.

**Hype Machine**  
People start to realise that *Prey* is shaping up to be something really rather special.

1997

2000

2004

2005

few, as far as I can remember. However, Talon (your favourite dead falcon in the whole world) is an ingenious way of ensuring that stupid players always remember which way to go – pecking at things of interest, translating alien glyphs (she's surprisingly astute when dealing with aliens for a bird who died in the mid-80s on an Indian reservation), or swooping over the heads of enemies and providing a neat distraction. *Prey* just does stuff differently.

Whereas lesser games just nick

the buggies from *Halo* for vehicle sections, Human Head instead provides flying spheres dogfighting around an asteroid (that you can get out and walk around on if you so wish), plucking enemies from their personal gravitational pull with a tractor beam and chucking them into space.

## WHAT GOES UP...

Gravity too, recently seen going downwards in the majority of recent releases, is being rethought. Massive barrier in the way? Simply approach a nearby console and invert gravity, or walk up one of the many *Metroid*-style walkways that allow you to sprint up walls and start dancing on the ceiling in the manner of Lionel Richie.

In practice, it may feel much like the (shit) *Alien* bits in the (good) *Alien Vs Predator* games, but here it creates all manner of (not shit) bizarre instances. You could be upside down, firing at a Hunter who's standing at 90-degrees to you on a nearby wall – after which you could invert gravity, but forget that while you're attached to a ceiling-based wallwalk panel, the large collection of heavy crates above your head on the floor certainly

aren't. Perhaps leading to yet another exciting trip through the afterlife through the medium of crushed Indian.

Surprisingly, another game whose spirit this madness evokes is that of *Descent* – the much-loved 360-degree shooting-robots-in-a-mine-game of yesteryear; a game whose greatness was only tempered by the times in

which you'd spend hours circling in bafflement having become well and truly lost in its labyrinthine caverns. Any such fears for *Prey*?

"That was one of the biggest issues we had," explains Tim Gerritsen. "With all of the gravity puzzles and the fact that we do mess with your mind quite a bit in the game, we were afraid that people were going to get completely lost. So we spent quite a bit of time refining the look of the game – you never get so far off the track that you don't know where you're supposed to be. There'll be lighting, lay-out signs and we've also thrown in things like dripping water so you can say, 'hey, that water's falling up, so I must be walking on the ceiling right now'."

So it'll be fine and dandy for whoever's playing, but I assure you that any spectators will sport a worried expression usually reserved for dogs who're in trouble (yet are unsure of exactly what they've done wrong). This is because any attempt to follow the action on-screen when you're not playing yourself ends in befuddlement.

"We were thinking about putting in a spectator vomit bag," jokes Gerritsen as he enters a cavernous hall with enough mind-bending wallwalks and three-dimensional antics to bring memories of David Bowie's Escher-styled halls in *Labyrinth* firmly home to roost.

## SEE THE LIGHT

But it's not just all these shiny new spins on FPS-ery that have grabbed our magpie-like attention – the game is packed with little details that show a great deal of lateral thinking on behalf of the developer.

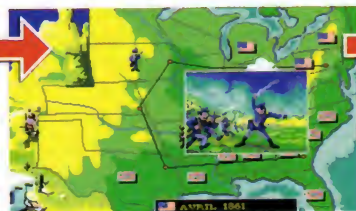
For example, the old chestnut of the self-extinguishing light source (as seen in *F.E.A.R.* and *Doom 3* with torches that mysteriously have to recharge every 30 seconds despite being in the hands of a player so technologically marvellous that they have guns that can strip flesh from bone in under two) is tackled

## Dead Red Indians

A brief and not entirely accurate history of Native Americans as seen through the eyes of gaming



1982: *Custer's Revenge* had the American hero perform various platform tasks with the aim of finally getting to rape a Native American woman tied to a post. Gaming's most shameful hour.



1990: at random points during *North & South*, a dancing Indian appears with a tomahawk that wipes out troops on certain spots of the map. They remain a goddamn nuisance, if not necessarily raped.



2005: in *Gun*, Native Americans take the power back. Not only are they the good guys, but your character is half-Indian as well. Hooray for under-represented indigenous peoples!



2006: Native Americans take the power back in space! Tommy saves the Earth (we're guessing) from an alien peril of immense nastiness. Maybe they'll give him his land back now.





## Portals in a storm

Just like lots of little stargates



Another way *Prey* is set to mess with your head is through many and various rips in the space-time continuum. Hunters will leap in and out of these with gay abandon, and you'll be able to fire through them, as well as nipping through yourself and having a bit of a poke around. Of course, *Prey* being the headf\*\*\* that it is, these portals won't necessarily just open up at 90-degrees on a handy platform – they could be above a massive pit, they could be in a wall, they might be positioned so that you don't even notice that you've been teleported upside-down and facing the wrong way on the ceiling. That's the magic of them portals.

NOTE Talon the great hawk. A lovely dead bird she is.



BUT really, to them, aren't WE the alien?



THESE Indian casinos are getting impressive.



with ingenious aplomb. For instance, in *Prey* Tommy carries a lighter that may flicker beautifully in the many squelchy corridors he traverses, but also gets really hot and means that he can't hold it lit for too long. Simple stuff, but also clever and effective.

It's not just that though: the aiming reticule that nips up from your sniper rifle and attaches itself directly to your retina; the lumps of processed flesh that you and your enemies use as cover until disintegrating into fleshy chunks; the distinct lack of ladders; the gooey pustules that bounce around levels and act as organic explosive barrels... Everything does a familiar FPS job, but has a wonderfully organic tinge – the template is what we've seen a thousand times before, but Human Head has gone to massive lengths to blur the edges and make everything feel alien and mysterious. As

mentioned earlier, Freud would have lots to say about whoever designed the doors.

### AND VIOLENCE TOO

It's also remarkably grim. As you potter around the Sphere, you come across little lumps of human influence – a discarded poker machine here, a flaming passenger jet flying through space there, a busload of eight-year-olds going nuts and impaling each other on spikes... You know the drill.

"There's already quite a bit of discussion on the Internet about the scene we released in the demo, of the kid being impaled on the spike," nods Gerritsen sagely. "But the thing is that it's all contextual, you're not impaling a kid on a spike yourself. They've all been sucked up with you and there are these parasite creatures called wraiths that live on a ship and they possess people and turn

them bad. So, in that particular scene, one of the kids gets possessed and starts doing damage to the other kids. You come across this horrific scene and you're powerless to aid her. We want to reinforce the fact to the player that there's bad things going on onboard this ship, and that you as a hero need to act or you'll end up like them." Or indeed like the automatons keeping the Sphere ticking over, or 'the bondage borg' as we like to think of them...

This is a Human Head game, but we don't doubt the importance of this being a 3D Realms project either, who may be victim to many a savage witticism over the perennial non-appearance of Mr Nukem, but still remain the godfather of interactivity on the PC. *Prey* bears all such hallmarks: a chatty lead character with a booming voice, a sense of the need for variety, an array of



intricate and well-thought out weapons and the ability to flush any toilet that happens to come your way. In the second level, the famed bar scene that has you strut around your girlfriend's pub before it all gets sucked up into the vacuum of space, you can fiddle with everything and anything: the jukebox has licensed music, the taps work, the arcade machines can be played, there's even a goddamn condom machine in there. It's a pub so realistic that you fully expect all the locks of the toilet doors to have been kicked off and there to be cigarette butts in the urinal that you can chase to the drain should you need to relieve yourself.

In key with the off-kilter approach to the ever self-replicating art form of the shooter, the weapons don't quite fit the usual 'melee, pistol, shotgun, little machine gun, big machine gun, grenade launcher, repeat to fade' mentality either. Sure, it's not far off the mark – but the alien overtones provides bugs

that can be thrown as grenades (or flipped over and used as sticky mines), guns that fire the gastric bug-goo over friend or foe, rocket launchers that can also use their invertebrate ammo to create protective shields of gas and a gun that can be charged up with electricity or other such destructive power from terminals you find dotted about the innards of the Dyson Sphere. In short, no-one will be complaining about *Prey* being yet another unoriginal machine-gun foray into offices, warehouses and Hong Kong docklands.

### OUT ON ITS OWN

In fact, towards the end of my time with *Prey*, I realised something. In my line of work I get to see a lot of games, and they invariably lay all their cards out on the table. All the Unique Selling Points in a pretty little marketable row. On the several occasions I saw *Quake 4*, it was always balls-out: "Look, vehicles! Look, Strogg! Wow, gun

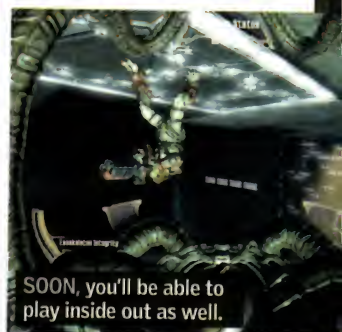
emplacement sections! Man, how cool!". And it was. It was all there on the table for me to see and recount. But with *Prey*... Well, *Prey* is acting remarkably coy. I've seen a great deal of its manifold innovations, but I can't delineate more clearly the absolutely whacking amount of it that's intended to be shrouded in 3D Realms mystery (ever the masters of secrecy) until the day you play it.

And that's the beauty of it – its real joy will be in discovery, in working out its nuances and clever riffs on the genre on your tod, without the hype machine having filled you up to the brim with prior knowledge first. This, for me, was what made the 3D Realms masterpiece *Duke Nukem 3D* such a truly wonderful game – and is what I believe will put *Prey* (and, for that matter, *Duke Nukem Forever*) in such good stead when its time comes. There's nothing in a game quite like being surprised, and if it isn't a surprise, then *Prey* doesn't seem to be interested. **PCZ**

**Human Head has gone to massive lengths to blur the edges and ensure that everything feels very alien and mysterious**

## Fragger on the roof

Peripheral vision comes in handy when you come to the 360-degree multiplayer



SOON, you'll be able to play inside out as well.

Each deathmatch map of *Prey* will play off one of *Prey*'s single-player innovations – one will be portal-heavy, one will have spheres that you'll be able to nip around in and dogfight with, and another will be laced with wallwalks. So, should you see an enemy lining up a shot with his laser-sighted sniper rifle – and he happens to be on the ceiling – all you have to do is slam a nearby terminal and watch him tumble down to earth for a messy death. Intriguing, non?

DIG those bitch tits.

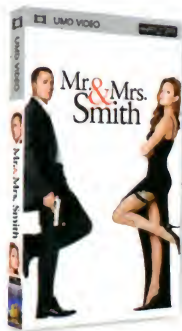




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OUT 25th NOV



OUT 2nd DEC



OUT 5th DEC



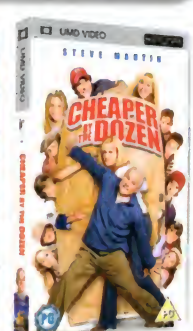
OUT 5th DEC



OUT 5th DEC



OUT 5th DEC



OUT 5th DEC



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PCZONE

# REVIEWS

Scaling the heights of PC gaming

SECTION EDITOR Paul Presley

## Pie And A Pint

**D**ARTS, POKER, CHESS and over there in the corner an old sailor telling war stories. Christ, it's like *PC ZONE* has turned into a pub this month. All we need is a copy of *International Domino Simulator Championship* from EA Sports to turn up and we'll have the full set.

I could do with a few pints anyway to dull the nerves. Christmas came early for most PC gamers, with all the quality titles on the shelves by early December. As a result, we're now hip-deep in the raging flood waters of a Christmas-period gaming drought. Thank heavens for *Prince Of Persia* or we'd have very little to get excited about.

As it is, the shirtless Arabian knight is single-handedly (or twin-handedly if you want to be pedantic) propping up the reviews section this month. That said, despite the mediocrity of the majority of games this month, what you will find over the next 20 or so pages is some of the finest and funniest games-writing ever committed to paper. And one of Porter's (ho ho). On that you have my personal guarantee. Of course, I am blisteringly drunk, so who knows what that's worth?

## Must Buys!

*PC ZONE* Classics are our highest award, with only the best games deemed worthy of honour. These are our personal top tips for sheer gaming excellence...



# PCZONE SWEARS...

- To only review code signed off by the publishers AND the developers
- To give you our honest opinion. We're gamers. We love games. And we hate bad ones. Just like you
- To tell you if a company refuses to send a game to us before it's on sale. There's always a reason
- To hang up on companies who say that 79% isn't a good score. What do they know?
- To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at [yourshout@pczone.co.uk](mailto:yourshout@pczone.co.uk)

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GAME OF THE MONTH

## PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES

Double trouble, twice the fun

### The PC ZONE Awards



**CLASSIC (90%+)**

The best games ever. If you're lucky enough to see one, stop and buy it.



**RECOMMENDED (75-89%)**

Pretty, pretty, pretty. Any game that turns *ZONE's* head is worthy of your love.



**DUMP (0-19%)**

Don't shirk your duty – it's the only responsible thing to do to a game like this.

### AND THE REST



**ONLINE ONLY**

Don't have an Internet connection? Then you're wasting your time. Move along please.



**EXPANSION PACK**

See this and you're going to have to own the original to play the expansion. We know – life's not fair.



**ON THE DISCS**

Good news! Check out the cover DVD for a playable demo or movie.

### The PC Class System

Not all games are created equal, so how do you know if your PC's up to the job? Using real science, we've graded your system from 1-5. Match it with the icon on each review to see if your PC will play the game. We review all games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Alienware Area-51.

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>CPU</b>	1.2GHz	1.8GHz	2.4GHz	3.0GHz	3.8GHz
<b>RAM</b>	128MB	256MB	512MB	1GB	1GB
<b>Video</b>	32MB	128MB	256MB	512MB	512MB

### ALSO REVIEWED

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  - 63 **HAMMER & SICKLE**
  - 64 **THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE**
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# PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES



Steve Hogarty doubles the prince and doubles the fun

DEVELOPER Ubisoft Montreal  
PUBLISHER Ubisoft  
WEBSITE  
www.princeofpersiagame.com  
ETA Out now  
PRICE £34.99



## AT A GLANCE...

The Prince is at it again, this time fighting not only sand demons, but mental demons as he comes to terms with his dubious morals, transforming into an evil version of himself and stuff.

### System requirements

#### HOW IT STACKS

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES	86%
PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME	84%
PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN	83%

**S**PRINTING IN A wide arc along a crumbling palace wall, I hook my chain onto a lantern above my head and propel myself towards the other side of the room, before plunging my blade into some conveniently-placed drapery and tearing downwards at alarming speed. I then leap away from the wall, use my chain like a grappling hook to vault across a precarious chasm (who builds chasms in palaces, honestly, health and safety would be up in arms),

wedge myself between two walls (legs split, à la *Splinter Cell*) and slide downwards, before finally dropping silently behind a person whose neck is about to get intimate with my dagger. And all in one fluid and perfectly choreographed movement with very little room for error. Get it right first time and you feel like a god, or at least a Cirque du Soleil reject; get it wrong and you can rewind time a bit and try again, pissing in the face of

death and giving two fingers to the laws of space-time.

You'll know exactly what I'm talking about if you've played either of the last two *Prince Of Persia* games – improbable acrobatics and time-altering antics are the bread and butter of the series. The latest doesn't wander too far from the proven formula of combat followed by jumping followed by fighting followed by leaping – in that order. In a way, nothing's really changed here, but in another, altogether more accurate way, it has. Whereas *Sands Of Time* touted a jolly, colourful Prince with a sarcastic attitude (Jonathan Ross), and *Warrior Within* had a much moodier, grown-up Prince (Ross Kemp), *The Two Thrones* falls somewhere in between, with the Prince acting like a humorously cynical hard-ass (Steve Hill).

## PRINCE OF DARKNESS

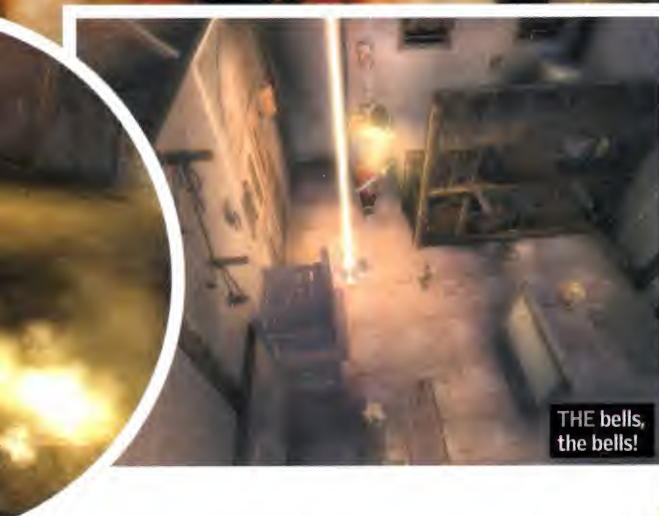
But first, an explanation of the title. *The Two Thrones* (insert the obvious toilet gag here) refers to the Prince's newfound split-personality and the game's shiny new staple. Basically, the Prince is attacked by an unpleasant lady with a huge barbed chain which gets lodged in our hero's arm. Soon after he becomes infected with the infamous *Sands Of Time*, which turn him temporarily into an evil version of himself, aptly titled







SOMEBODY'S not been flossing.



THE bells, the bells!

'the Dark Prince'. The NHS is helpless to fight the infection, having not been invented yet (typical NHS), and the Prince is left to endure an epic internal struggle between good and evil, occasionally conversing and arguing with his evil (and annoyingly sarcastic) conscience, floundering in a sea of morality and eventually discovering what it means to be a true warrior. It's all quite meaningful, and if you're not careful you could slip into deep philosophical thought while using your barbed chain to brutally smack about some enemies.

## CHAIN GANG

Despite being harder, better, stronger and faster than the Regular Prince, the Dark Prince, as you'd expect, comes with some drawbacks. The main one is that you can't change into or out of your evil form at will (the changes are scripted), along with the fact that as the Dark Prince, your health is constantly depleting – the only method of staying alive is to find sand either by smashing furniture or killing enemies. You can't help but feel that these are decisions Ubisoft Montreal didn't make lightly. For instance, the ability to change into your



## Time To Reflect

Who's the fairest of them all?



"MAN, I look good."

Being the astute person you are, you undoubtedly spotted *The Two Thrones'* vague similarity to the original game (that's the original original game). In the very first 2D *Prince Of Persia*, you come face to face with an impassable mirror which, after some confusion, you must jump through at full speed – the mirror remains unscathed, but a mirror image of the Prince pops out the other side. An evil mirror image of course. Then there was this fantastic little ominous tune that played, (sorta like 'dun dun duuuun'). Later on in the game, you finally face yourself in combat, and find yourself unbeatable by any normal methods. Tch. They don't make them like they used to eh?

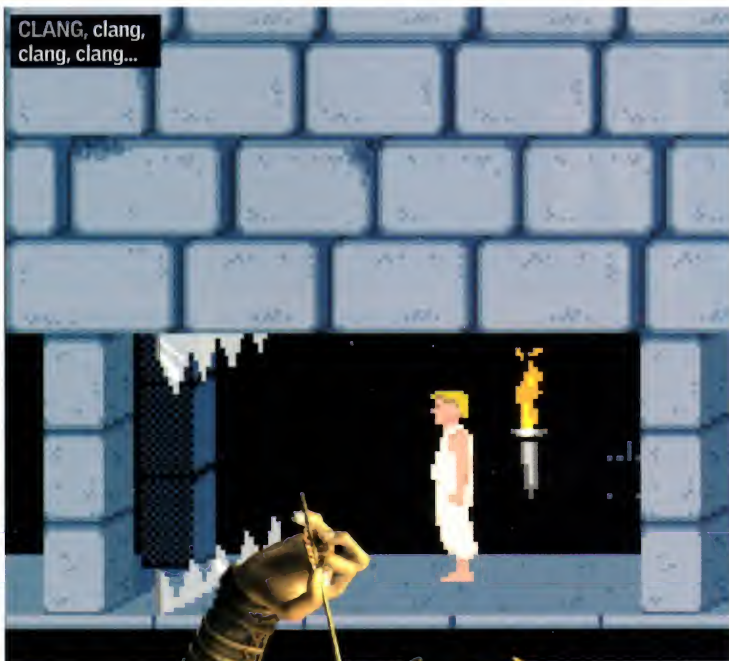
You could slip into deep philosophical thought while using your barbed chain to brutally smack about some enemies



## GMD(OD)

Back a bit, no forward... Wait... Now... JUMP!

CLANG, clang,  
clang, clang...



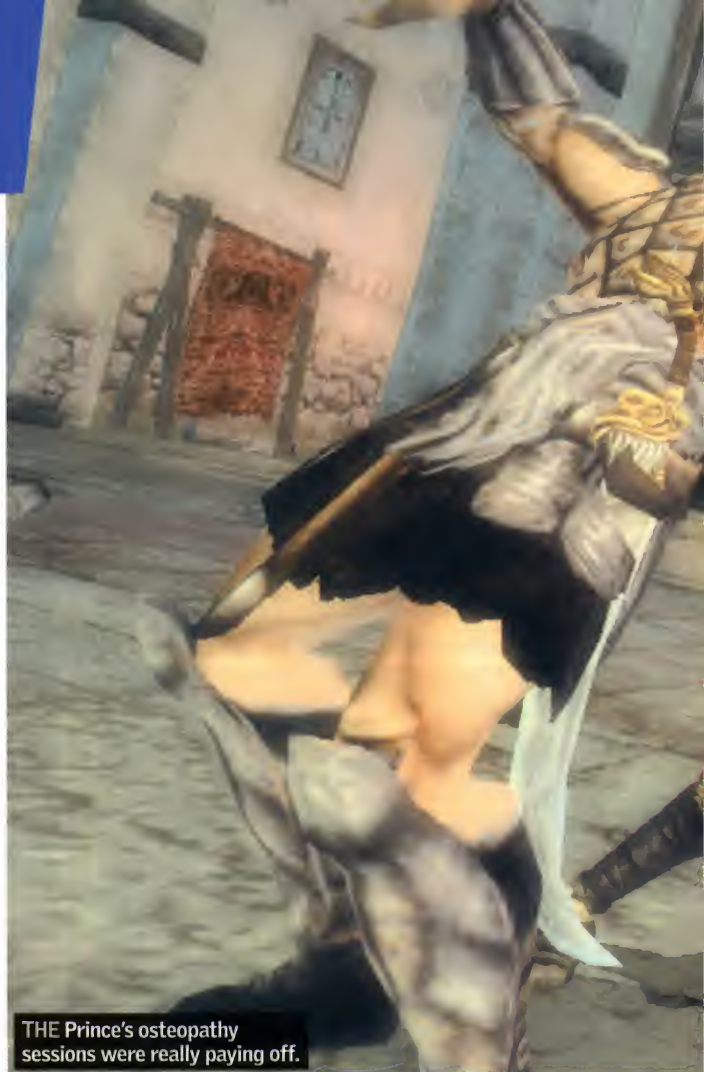
Actually, that last boxout got me thinking. The original 2D *Prince Of Persia* was an amazing game, and even though the 3D incarnations have a wider range of death-dealing traps, they never reintroduced a personal favourite of ours: Gnashing Metal Doors (Of Death). Oh, how we yearn for the days when only a perfectly-timed jump would be enough to avoid being sliced into two half-Princes by the Gnashing Metal Doors (Of Death). It's unclear why Ubisoft has neglected to include them, but we suddenly feel cheated. We've got a good mind to go back and knock a good 20 per cent off the final score.



THWACKO!



ZOMP!



THE Prince's osteopathy sessions were really paying off.

alter-ego whenever you wanted would've changed the game almost entirely. This is because the levels are designed with a specific version of the Prince in mind, so some sections will be rife with places to use your chain, while others will cater for the normal Prince's more modest array of abilities. Meanwhile, the decision to have the time-limit on the Dark Prince's lifespan adds a sense of urgency which couldn't have been achieved in many other ways. Besides, your diminishing health doesn't really pose much of a problem as long as you don't stand around admiring the Dark Prince's groovy new hairdo for too long.

We have to admit though, the Dark Prince makes a terrible first impression. At first, the Dark Prince feels underpowered (despite the fact that he's actually more powerful),

grappling hook. It also becomes a favoured weapon, particularly when surrounded by multiple enemies.

## DANCE THE DANCE OF DEATH

Common to both the good and evil Princes are the flashy new speed kills. Creep up behind an enemy, wait for the screen to flash and then launch into a superbly animated death sequence which sees you hitting buttons when your dagger flashes. If you fail to hit the button at the right time, you cock-up the sequence and get slapped about embarrassingly by your would-be victim.

OK, so it's here that the title's console leaning are most apparent (you should be playing this with a pad anyway), but not only do speed kills allow you to kill enemies

## The Two Thrones impresses with flowing gameplay and beautiful visuals

and the chain weapon which replaces your secondary weapon slot and prevents you from doing leaping melee attacks (an extremely useful move that can kick enemies off ledges) feels clumsy and inaccurate.

In time, however, you'll warm to his charred skin and evil, staring eyes, and once the Dark Prince's full athletic potential is realised, he becomes a joy to control, easily outshining the regular Prince's acrobatic manoeuvres. Plus, the chain which at first seemed like a hindrance soon becomes integral to getting about, acting as a

quickly and safely (well, mostly safely), they also play a role in sections of the game where it's important to kill a certain enemy before he spots you and calls in reinforcements. Boss fights also employ speed kills as the preferred method of death-dealing, which makes for fantastically cinematic and beautifully animated combat. Add to that the fact that hanging upside down from a chain before stealthily dropping to the floor with cat-like grace, pouncing on a seven-foot tall soldier's back, plunging your dagger deep into his shoulder,





flipping over to stare your foe in the face before tearing downwards and splitting him open... Well, that's just really, really cool.

## DO IT AGAIN

So what else has changed? Ubisoft has tried somewhat successfully to remedy the repetitive nature of the last two games, adding some scenes where you race through the streets in a chariot, fending off attackers from all sides and trying not to plough horse-first into a wall.

It's rather bland action but it's fun all the same, with controls that could've been a whole lot worse and a decent sense of speed. The boss battles are bigger, more epic, far more interesting and bloody difficult at times too, more so than in the previous games (as people in our office within earshot of me can vouch for). But for the most part, you'll be in familiar territory – the Prince will become more and more naked as the game goes on, intricate puzzles litter the various brothels and palaces, and

enemies dissolve and turn to sand when you stab them enough.

## JUST GREAT

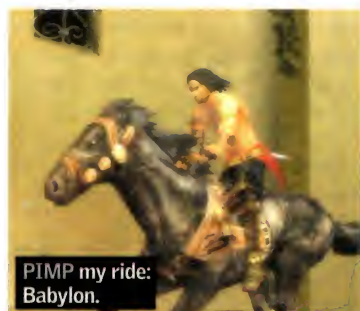
So yes, the Dark Prince is great and speed kills are great. Hanging from chains is great and shimmying between walls is great. Even the bosses are great. There's a lot of greatness to be witnessed in *The Two Thrones*, that's for sure, but unfortunately it can't breach the 90 per cent barrier and enter the realm of the Classic award, for the same reasons its predecessors couldn't. Even though the combat is fantastic, the animations beautiful and the sheen shiny, there's no real deal-clincher here – it sometimes feels a bit shallow and despite Ubisoft's best efforts, repetitive.

Some of the new features on the acrobatic side of things too, such as springy panels on walls which launch you diagonally for some reason, seem a bit forced and unbelievable (running along walls and leaping huge distances is perfectly believable).

There's also very little reason to play it twice, unless you enjoy unlocking artwork you didn't unlock the first time through.

But forget about those niggles, as they shouldn't put you off playing. With its superb story, sublime animation and fantastic fluidity, *The Two Thrones* impresses with flowing gameplay and beautiful visuals. And to top it all, Ubisoft hasn't botched the PC conversion: with a decent gamepad, you'll enjoy this on your desktop as much as on your Xbox – more in fact, because PCs are great.

Fans of the series will lap this up without any disappointment; newcomers will enjoy it too (before rushing out and buying the last two, as nature intended), and the British Museum will scoff at its inaccuracies, but love it anyway. *The Two Thrones* is quite simply the best *Prince Of Persia* so far. It builds on what went before and adds a new dimension to the main character. It also adds new depth to the gameplay, while still sticking closely to the tenets that made the last two games so engrossing. Namely, lots of fighting, lots of jumping and lots of outright fun. **PCZ**



## PCZONE

Graphics Great for a console port  
Sound Fantastic music  
Multiplayer None

- ✓ Brilliant animation
- ✓ Hugely enjoyable combat
- ✓ Fantastic 'jumpy bits'
- ✓ Highly polished
- ✗ Gets a bit repetitive
- ✗ Not a huge amount of variation

**86**  
Master of the thrones





STREET gangs obviously lead the field in clone research.



# CRIME LIFE: GANG WARS

More 'two-bob fifty' than 50 Cent, Paul Presley hereby changes his name to MC Prezshizzle, y'getme?

**DEVELOPER** Hothouse Creations  
**PUBLISHER** Konami  
**WEBSITE** [www.crime-life.com](http://www.crime-life.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £24.99

**POPULAR GAMING COMMENTARY** website UK Resistance recently ran what it called the Blue Sky In Games campaign. An end to all this dreary urban yoof street gang violence dark days misery. A return to the days when gaming meant collecting golden rings in colourful platform worlds made of ice cream, and a colour palette bedecked with yellows, pinks and lime greens. It's a noble cause, a good cause, a just cause, a cause we at *PC ZONE* heartily endorse. Sadly, *Crime Life* couldn't be further from these aims if it tried, and instead represents a particularly nasty nadir in the path of gaming history.

It's a non-stop relentless-o-thon. A melange of drive-bys, gangbanging, robberies, urban decay, violent actions and people talking Ebonics. Or a carefully monitored, marketing-led, BBFC-friendly interpretation of Ebonics, expressly designed to appeal to the target demographic, at any rate. Oh, and it's not much cop.

The premise is that you're a new initiate into the street gang The Outlawz (although



with no back-story, character or introduction it feels as though you've just dropped into the world, Mr Bean-style). You have to prove your chops by, basically, beating everyone up, committing crime and generally hell-raising in the worst possible way.

## NOT QUITE 8 MILE

With the emphasis on worst. This amounts to lots and lots of fighting, anyone and everyone, giving the *Crime Life* world the feel of one giant deathmatch arena, rather than any serious look at gang life in the

modern age. It's not helped by the worst camera since *The Matrix: Path Of Neo*, never quite giving you enough view to avoid distant trouble spots or turning fast enough to give you fluid control over the combat.

On top of that, the visual style employed doesn't exactly push the boundaries of modern technology, with poor textures, animation and detail, all giving the impression of a half-hearted console port at best.

There's plenty to explore, but despite the amount of 'real life' scenery dressing (non-drivable cars, civilians, shops, bars, strip

## AT A GLANCE...

Reprehensible urban violence simulator with little in the way of redeeming features, but plenty of the old ultra-violence.

**System requirements** 3

### HOW IT STACKS

GTA: SAN ANDREAS **92%**

MANHUNT **74%**

CRIME LIFE **38%**



## Down Wit' Dat

So much for role models...



GO on then fat boy, sing.

As you work through *Crime Life* (and it is work, it's certainly not entertainment), you unlock bonuses and extras such as music tracks, concept art and video interviews, with the big-name rappers providing the game's soundtrack. Rappers such as Bizarre from the popular Eminem-fronted combo D12, who in one sterling exchange reveals that he likes to relax by, "y'know, just chillin' man. I be chillin'. Y'know what I'm saying?" He likes to relax by, er, relaxing. How illuminating.

The whole interview (such as it is) is like that, and it's right there that the reason why rap music should be banned is illustrated most vividly. Not because it's a bad influence on the young. Not because it encourages violence. Not because it treats women with disrespect. Not because it's anti-social or any of that rubbish. No, the basic reason is that the majority of its so-called heroes are F\*\*\*ING BRAIN-DEAD, ILLITERATE MORONS WHO ARE NO MORE DESERVING OF ANY RESPECT THAN A RANCID VOLE. That's all. Glad I got that off my chest.

## Crime Life thinks that throwing every cliché in the book at you is enough to justify the never-ending violence

clubs and so on), none of it really amounts to much, not helped by the lack of any decent story structure to tie everything together.

### WESTSIDE STORY

You see, whereas something like *GTA: San Andreas* manages to invest in the game's street life action a story with decent characterisation, actual dramatic development and genuine interest, *Crime Life* seems to think that throwing every cliché in the book at you is sufficient to justify the never-ending stream of violence. *GTA* attempts to justify your actions. *Crime*

*Life* simply revels in its moral abhorrence. *GTA* is deep. *Crime Life* is shallow. *GTA* keeps it real (ish). *Crime Life* is as real as Ali G. *GTA* entertains. *Crime Life* bores.

Even the violence doesn't appeal much beyond the first few gang brawls. With combat happening roughly every ten steps, it doesn't take long for you to exhaust the different fighting moves on offer, and although some variety is afforded by grabbing different weapons, most fights are pretty random button-mashing affairs with little in the way of grace, style or skill on display.



Is there anything to recommend then? Well, at a pinch you can argue the soundtrack is decent, but then, having spent so much money signing the cream of the UK and European rap scene, that's to be expected (although if you're not into your hardcore hip-hop, you'll not find anything here to appeal other than the Music Off option). The attempt at creating a free-roaming world does offer some interest, although with no option to use vehicles or swing the camera into a view that feels comfortable, it all feels very sub-*GTA*.

That's *Crime Life*'s biggest problem really. Everything you could want from this game is done far, far better in *GTA: San Andreas*. Whatever differences there are (other than in terms of quality) unfortunately ring of being marketing-led and as such feel venomous, cynical and morally bankrupt. Applying a random lead pipe battering to an old woman in the street, for instance, often results in absolutely no negative consequence whatsoever. Which sends out a reprehensible message to the more impressionable gamers (especially over on the console market, which is where most of *Crime Life*'s sales will take place).

Am I being over-sensitive? No, I don't think so. I'd happily recommend the similarly violent *GTA* series, but mainly on grounds of quality gaming. *Crime Life* fails in both gaming and moral terms. What we wouldn't have given for a few shiny rings to collect. Y'getme? **PCZ**



## PCZONE

Graphics Lacklustre textures and a horrible camera  
Sound A good mix of UK, Euro and US rap  
Multiplayer Nope, you're a gang of one

- ✓ Music's OK if you like rap
- ✓ Hasn't been held responsible for any real-life murders...
- ✗ ...Yet
- ✗ No moral heart whatsoever
- ✗ Awful camera
- ✗ Combat tires quickly

**38**  
Sub-*GTA* shocker







THE battlefield looks fairly convincing.



STOP showing off, no-one's looking mate.



GET whacked too many times and you'll become dazed.

# DYNASTY WARRIORS 4 HYPER

Martin Korda sharpens his katana and prepares to battle Joan Collins and co...

DEVELOPER Koei  
PUBLISHER Koei  
WEBSITE  
www.koei.co.uk  
ETA Out now  
PRICE £14.99



## AT A GLANCE...

An epic oriental hack-and-slasher, jam-packed with enemies and some great RPG elements that's high on carnage, but low on replayability.

System requirements 2

HOW IT STACKS

GTA: SAN ANDREAS 92%

HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED 88%

DYN WARRIORS 4 HYPER 70%

I COULD PROBABLY count on the digits of one-and-a-half hands the amount of decent console conversions I've played on the PC. "Hah, that's seven and a half you twat!" you might be thinking and you'd be right – because *Dynasty Warriors 4*, an epic oriental hack-and-slasher that fared so well on the PS2 and Xbox has actually translated into a half-decent PC game.

It's tribute to the big grey box that one of the console world's big-hitting titles fails to raise more than a cursory eyebrow, despite a faithful translation. Sure, the epic battles – in which you hack through hordes of enemies with an upgradeable warrior – are visually impressive, but despite the game's merits, it's impossible to escape its dumbed-down nature.

Things kick off fairly promisingly (despite the lazy consoley front-end), as you select from one of nine warriors and equip them with

an array of weaponry. Then, after a beautifully rendered cut-scene replete with unintentionally comical non lip-synched dialogue, it's straight out into the battlefield.

## TAKE COVER!

Suddenly, you're transported into a warzone, where hordes of enemy and ally warriors are charging at each other, bellowing fearsome war cries and carving each other up. With no time to admire your surroundings, you're left with little choice but to wade into the fray with your given weapon – sword, staff, halberd and so on – and start turning your enemies into easily digestible treats for wild dogs and wandering Peperami lovers.

This is where *DW4* becomes both

infuriating and exhilarating in near equal measures. Exhilarating because you're tasked with turning the tide of the conflict by hacking through scores of enemies with an array of combos, projectile attacks (including bows and bombs) and some superb special Musou moves that first need to be powered up. Infuriating because the abysmal camera makes it virtually impossible to face the enemy for any prolonged period, meaning you're soon being flanked faster than a bitch on heat in an all-male dog sanctuary.

## PEDESTRIAN WARRIORS

To be honest, it's a bit of a kick in the furry spheres, as with a better camera and more dynamic team and enemy AI, this could



IT'S all too easy to lose your head in battle.



KILL an enemy commander to earn some great bonuses.





## Take the challenge

More of the same, different name



ENCOUNTER levels task you with taking on an opponent in a darkened locale.

If you don't fancy bashing your way through an entire campaign, there are some obligatory challenges for you to try. Escort sees you guarding a convoy while trying to destroy an opponent's; Encounter is a one-on-one fight in a level so dimly lit you'll be manically slapping at your monitor's contrast button; and Challenge Mode tasks you with killing as many enemies as possible before you die. Who said originality was dead, eh?

have been an awesome PC game. With a rock track raising the pulse to frenzied proportions and the often overwhelming enemy forces creating the perfect recipe for crazed action, you're sadly left feeling that both your allies and the enemy are engaging each other with utter indifference, merely waiting for you to dive in and do all the hard work. Sure, it's fun to be a war hero, but in such an unconvincing theatre, it's hard to feel particularly smug for being a killing machine. The problem is compounded when, after several hours of button-mashing, you realise just how repetitive the game actually is.

*Dynasty Warriors 4* is a console game through and through, but the sheer scope of its battles and some deceptive depth do raise it above many of its ported counterparts. It's hardly a gaming masterpiece, but for a bit of slashing action at a slashed price, you could definitely do a lot worse. **PCZ**

NOW that's what I call taking one for the team.

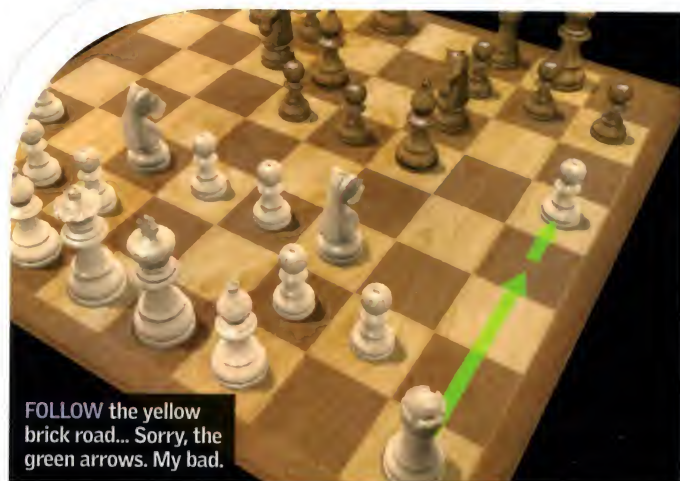
# PCZONE

Graphics Vibrant and detailed  
Sound Heart-racing  
Multiplayer Hackneyed console-style challenges

- ✓ Large battles
- ✓ Decent RPG elements
- ✓ Nine varied characters to play as
- ✗ Slightly stagnant AI
- ✗ Repetitive
- ✗ Poor camera

# 70

Cheap but fun console hack-fest



FOLLOW the yellow brick road... Sorry, the green arrows. My bad.

## FRITZ CHESS 9

The most exciting chess simulator... Ever!

DEVELOPER Chessbase  
PUBLISHER Excalibur Publishing  
WEBSITE [www.playchess.com](http://www.playchess.com)  
ETA Out now  
PRICE £34.99

### System requirements 1

**S**OME PEOPLE BELIEVE that chess is the definitive tactical game (they obviously haven't played *SWAT 4* online with us), and for those poor souls, *Fritz Chess 9* claims to be "the ultimate chess videogame". We don't know if that makes you as excited as we are, but with this epic piece of software, we can finally challenge our PC hardware head-on, and send it fleeing with its tail between its legs.

With an improved and more powerful chess engine, *Fritz Chess 9* promises to be "the best chess-playing game available". Unfortunately, despite what the bearded ones say, a chess simulator is about as thrilling as a night at the bingo with your gran. Played in either a 3D or top-down view, the game's engine throws around more tactical data than Jose Mourinho's blackboard, in addition to an annoying coach who warns you every time you make a stupid move. And don't worry if you're a chess virgin – there's a wealth of tutorial videos to



A very interesting man.



WHERE'D everybody go?

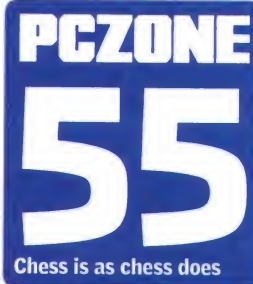
guide the uneducated through this riveting Russian pastime too.

*Fritz Chess 9* is designed to teach and train chess players, and should be treated as such. If you're looking for an authentic chess experience, we suggest getting a real chessboard. That way you can experience all of the cold stares and inevitable post-match scuffles that come with this wonderful game.

Andy Robinson



GO horsey, go!



Chess is as chess does





# BATTLEGROUND EUROPE

It's taken four years to get here and *Richie Shoemaker* wonders whether there's anything left to fight for

**DEVELOPER**  
Cornered Rat Software  
**PUBLISHER** GMX Media  
**WEBSITE**  
www.battleground-europe.com  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £19.99  
(subscription required,  
first 30 days included)

**I**F **BATTLEGROUND EUROPE** looks vaguely familiar, that's because it was released over four years ago under its previous moniker *WWII Online*. Since then, it's been reviewed once or twice within these pages and the general consensus was that it showed a great deal of promise. Four years of updates later and it's still way ahead of the competition.

*BE* is a 'virtual battlefield' simulation. You may notice on the back of the box that nowhere will you find the letters F, P, or S in

familiar proximity with one another. It's a first-person shooter, clearly, but *BE* must be judged on different terms to the likes of even *PlanetSide*, its closest MMO rival. Yes, *BE* looks about as appealing as an old lettuce left swilling about at the bottom of the fridge, but the scale of the game far exceeds any FPS you'd care too mention – all their efforts combined, in fact. Where *Battlefield 2* offers impressive oil installations and small-island archipelagos, *BE* maps out the whole of Western Europe (well, most of it), where the front lines shift as allies and axis forces

capture airfields, supply depots, factories, ports and entire cities. Best of all, unlike in *PlanetSide*, where the battles quickly fade into one relentless and futile slog, here a victor will emerge. Take note Sony: without the hope of victory, what's the point of fighting?

## WE'LL MEAT AGAIN

The key to *BE*'s appeal is its relative complexity. Research has to be undertaken by the High Command (which is staffed by real players), resources have

### AT A GLANCE...

Imagine *Battlefield 1942* set across a single map the size of Europe, with battles that last for days on end. Factor in extreme realism, intense teamwork, basic sound and vision, and you have *Battleground Europe* in a nutshell.

#### System requirements

3

#### HOW IT STACKS

BATTLEFIELD 2 94%

PLANETSIDE 82%

BATTLEGROUND EUROPE 72%





## The real thing

Stick to what you know



WHILE the avatar models are basic and crude close up, the vehicles are more than acceptable.

There's no third-person view from the vehicles in this game. Tank drivers have to live with the letterbox view. If you want to see outside, you must open the hatch and hope that there isn't an enemy squad waiting in the bushes. There's no automatic transmission either; sight ranges are manual and you can't get airborne in an aircraft just by pressing two keys. Aircraft have flaps and trim, and making too many strafing dives will cause you to black out and experience a fiery death. For this reason, unless you're a veteran of *IL-2* and the like, you should leave the flying to the flyboys, the sailing to the sailors and the tanking to the, er, tankers.

to be distributed and supplies have to get through to keep towns repaired and armouries fully stocked. As complex as it is, at no point is it unfathomable nonsense. The concept of a General outlining his strategy, and that being formalised as it passes down the ranks, is a familiar one.

Such layered strategic planning requires a degree of teamwork, and again *BE* is way ahead of the likes of the *Battlefield* games. There's no firing squad waiting for you if you do go AWOL, there's no need for one. Head off on your own and you'll more than likely end up dead, either from a bullet, or through unrelenting boredom. Instead, you have to get with the program. Recruits are the proverbial fresh meat for the grinder and you're made to feel as much. If you want to get your hands on a Bren gun, you have to earn your stripes with a rifle.

## WHEN PENCILS ATTACK

Graphically, *BE* has improved immensely in a relatively short space of time, but it's still lagging behind even the most modest FPS. That alone will deter people, but the gameplay is also an acquired taste. More immediate and action-packed, *Unreal Tournament* is still the online shooting master, or if you prefer a dab of realism with your combined-arms action, you still can't beat *BF2* as an all-round team FPS experience.

*BE* is the complete battlefield experience though. Every death is a frustration, every kill a hard-won victory and for every firefight that has you sweating with tension, there'll be another that will have you wanting to stick pencils into your eyes just to relieve the boredom of guarding a backwater choke point. War is like that, apparently, and *Battleground Europe* is as real as it gets. **PCZ**

## PCZONE

Graphics Not great. Think pre-beta era *BF1942*  
Sound Crude samples and synthesized effects  
Multiplayer Layered and realistic

- ✓ It's *Battlefield 1942: Hardcore Edition*
- ✓ Incredibly rich in strategy and scope
- ✓ Promotes selfless camaraderie like no other FPS
- ✗ Duh! Look at the screenshots
- ✗ It's hard work
- ✗ You don't get paid

# 72

Good, but not for everyone



## HAMMER & SICKLE

### Communism is the answer

DEVELOPER Nival Entertainment  
PUBLISHER CDV  
WEBSITE [www.hammer-sickle.com](http://www.hammer-sickle.com)  
ETA February 24  
PRICE £19.99

### System requirements 2

**L**IKE MOST GAMES to come from Eastern Europe, *Hammer & Sickle* is incredibly bizarre. While it promises extensive character development and complete freedom over game progression, what we're left with is a dated turn-based RTS where the few redeeming features are lost between the clunky interface and sub-par character animation. Along the way something seems to have been lost in translation; a growing sense of unease is created by straight-faced character animations, while the dialogue rivals that of an Argos catalogue in terms of exciting literature.

It's just all so sensible – after playing the game for a while I would have given my first-born child just to see the main character crack a smile, or jokingly call his commanding officer a mildly crude name. Instead, we're left with his cold, blank stare for hour upon

hour of archaic game design and hilarious one-liners such as: "The flies here have quite a sting!"

But there is a competent strategy game in there somewhere; padded between the questionable soundtrack and extremely basic production values. I'm sure that some perverted fellow out there will find some enjoyment. After all, the character customisation is nice and any game that still features communist Soviets has an old-school heart in it. In the most part though, avoid this one like you would an elderly relative at a wedding reception who's suffering from the plague.

Andy Robinson

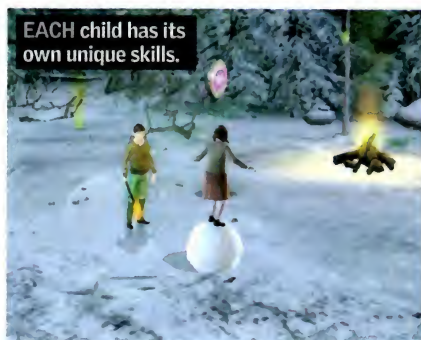


## PCZONE

# 60

Commie Traitor





EACH child has its own unique skills.



MRS Macready is not to be crossed.



PUT some clothes on, you'll catch a chill.

# THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

Finally realising that pink isn't his colour, *Martin Korda* goes back into the closet...

**DEVELOPER** Traveller's Tales  
**PUBLISHER** Buena Vista Games  
**WEBSITE** [www.narniathegame.com](http://www.narniathegame.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £24.99



## AT A GLANCE...

A colourful, basic and predictable action/adventure that closely follows the movie, but is unlikely to appeal to gamers over the age of ten.

## System requirements

2

## HOW IT STACKS

PSYCHONAUTS 90%

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE 73%

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA 58%

**H**ERE IT IS, the obligatory game of the Christmas family movie blockbuster, unleashed on an unsuspecting public still dazzled by the magical celluloid romp through the wintry world of Narnia. And now, for your buying information, the obligatory review urging you to keep your notes toasty and warm in your wallet, ready for a game more worthy of their crisp, hard-earned rustle.

As movie tie-ins go, *The Chronicles Of Narnia* is by no means the worst gaming cash-in you're ever likely to see. However, in terms of quality, originality and entertainment, it's hardly going to set your socks on fire either.

Predictably, it's the usual action/adventure fare that seems to be de rigueur for hit family movies, tasking you with controlling four posh kid characters as they embark in a coin-collecting, obstacle-moving, enemy-bashing adventure.



THE game becomes far more entertaining later on.

The key here is co-operation, with each plummy child boasting their very own skills that must be used both individually and co-operatively to solve a collection of often patronising puzzles. Combat isn't much better either, mainly consisting of manically mashing the attack button and hoping the unresponsive controls point you in the direction you're pressing.

## ALL TOGETHER NOW

Pretty depressing so far then, but it's not all doom and gloom for the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. First off, younger readers (and no, 29 doesn't count) will be happy to know that the game can be played co-operatively, meaning that combining character skills suddenly becomes a far more entertaining prospect.

What's more, there are a multitude of skills and moves to unlock, and later in the game you'll find yourself utilising some highly imaginative tricks and attacks. There are also countless excerpts from the

films that convincingly link one mission to the next, along with some decent graphics and sound that help to suck you into the mystical, icy world that is Narnia. So, not quite so bad after all then.

Seriously, if you've got kids who are eight or below and you want to shut them up for a few nights (just be aware there are loads of spoilers in the game) while you and the missus get some much needed post-Christmas rest, then *The Chronicles Of Narnia* is a must-buy. But if you're looking for an entertaining post-work action/adventure romp, this simply isn't worth the moolah. **PCZ**

## PCZONE

Graphics Pretty, if a little on the chunky side  
Sound Magical soundtrack, decent effects  
Multiplayer Two-player co-op

- ✓ Great fun for younger kids
- ✓ Entertaining co-op mode
- ✗ Predictable and unoriginal in the extreme
- ✗ Clunky controls

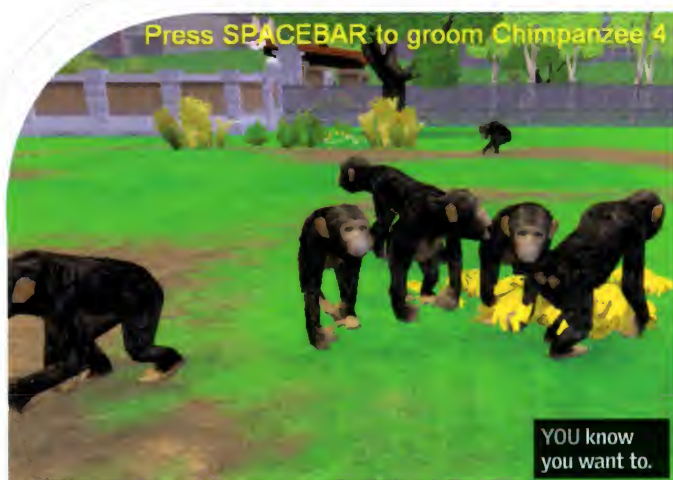
**58**  
For da kidz



COMBAT is a bit of a button-mashing affair.

1 SET FIRE TO THE BUSHES TO STOP MORE WOLVES FROM COMING.





## ZOO TYCOON 2: ENDANGERED SPECIES

Scoop up rare animal poop

**DEVELOPER** Blue Fang Games  
**PUBLISHER** Microsoft Game Studios  
**WEBSITE** [www.zootycoon2.com](http://www.zootycoon2.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £19.99

### System requirements

**O**n our large list of sadistic gaming tasks, including shooting our own team-mates on Normandy Beach and teaching our Sims to burn the house down, saving near extinct animals doesn't crop up once. That's because it isn't immoral, it isn't rock 'n' roll and we can't brag about it in the pub. We do love monkeys though, and this *Zoo Tycoon 2* expansion pack has got plenty of them. Endangered ones! This latest *Zoo* release extends your library of animals to giant turtles, Komodo Dragons, as well as many other animals on the brink of extinction.

That's not all though, there's plenty of new habitats to build around your animal friends as well as bridges, sky trams, vehicle tours and a ton of new scenery pieces for your zoo. Apart from these material additions, *Endangered Species* remains very much the same game as the original title.

*Zoo Tycoon* is still more of a laid-back affair than other strategy games, asking you to perfect your site layout and keep your cute animals happy. In this respect, if you enjoy squandering time away on the original title, you're bound to find more joy and excitement from the additional animals and buildings included in this expansion. Now if



you'll excuse us, we're attempting to breed two Scimitar-horned oryx.

Andy Robinson



**PCZONE**  
**65**  
Same old monkey



## HELLFORCES

Let's all go to hell and back. Again

**DEVELOPER** Orion  
**PUBLISHER** GMX Media  
**WEBSITE** [www.gmxmedia.net/hellforces](http://www.gmxmedia.net/hellforces)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £29.99

### System requirements

**T**his has been in the shops for a while now, but *Hellforces* unfortunately slipped beneath our radar after its representatives would only make theatrical coughing noises when we questioned them on its whereabouts. Why? It's an aberration unto gaming, that's why.

The guns handle so badly that you might as well be left-clicking a particularly savage number in an Excel spreadsheet, the game's AI consists solely of soldiers jogging on the spot next to walls, while the level design focuses around getting lost for what seems like hours until you find a misplaced key next to a brick in an alley.

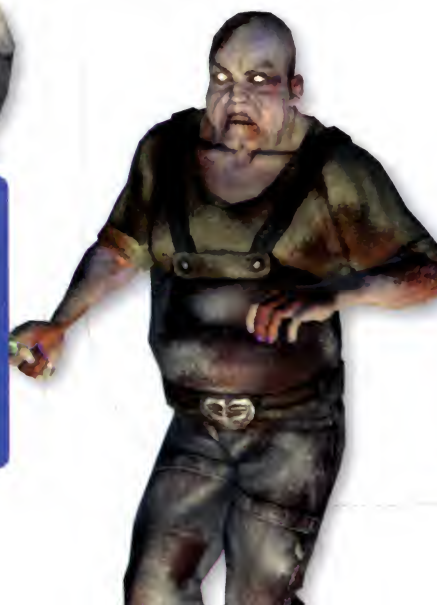
Redeeming features? Well, it has zombies whose faces fall off when



they're shot, although they must also have built-in inertial dampeners since five chest shots have no apparent effect until the final bullet nudges them off the edge of their mortal coil and they cartwheel off in ragdoll convulsions. Or at least collapse in a horseshoe with their face gently nuzzling their undead crotch. No, the graphics aren't that bad – but repeatedly dying because of stupid rats nibbling your feet or fouling up the same crap platform-to-platform jumps again and again really is.

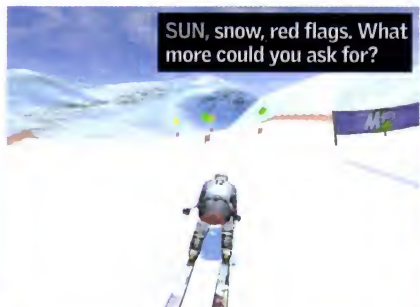
I've reviewed some games that have made my balls ache in my time, but this one takes the biscuit of dull pain. Fundamentally abominable!

Will Porter



**PCZONE**  
**29**  
Hell faeces





# SKI RACING 2006

Steve Hogarty scores some speed and carves some powder

DEVELOPER ColdWood  
PUBLISHER JoWood  
WEBSITE  
www.skiracing2006.com  
ETA Out now  
PRICE £19.99

## AT A GLANCE...

This is skiing, simulated, in a game. You know, speeding down snowy slopes and stuff. Not much else.

## System requirements

3

## HOW IT STACKS

VIRTUAL SKIPPER 3 81%

SKI RACING 2006 66%

SKI RACING 2005 44%

TEAM Beaver. No finer team to ski for.



SKIING in a winter wonderland.



**LET'S JUST FOR** one moment ignore the fact that *Ski Racing 2006* is a game in which you slide down an icy mountain over and over again. Also, let's ignore the fact that like Formula One and snooker, skiing is only ever exciting to watch when somebody is crashing into a wall and breaking bones. Now, with that cynicism locked away in a little box inside your mind, let me tell you about *Ski Racing 2006*.

## WHOOSH!

This is skiing's answer to *Virtual Skipper*, and if that thought alone hasn't made your little box of cynicism explode, then maybe, just maybe you'll be interested in this niche sports sim title. Even though skis are widely believed to be the most

boring method of getting down a hill (after, you know, walking), and even though the activity has been dwarfed by the invention and subsequent rise to popularity of the humble snowboard, *Ski Racing 2006* actually manages to squeeze some enjoyment out of the sport.

Graphically, the game is superb – draw distances meander off to distant snow-capped peaks and hidden villages, and the high-speed motion blur gives a decent impression of hurtling down the side of a frozen rock on a pair of flimsy planks. The animations are precise and accurate (as far as I can tell anyway... I'm not an expert on skiing stances), conveying nicely that athletically impressive side-to-side slalom movement and the uneasy wavering of a skier whose snow has just dropped from under him. There's also the option to give a positive or negative reaction at the end of a run, using the good old PgUp and PgDown keys.

Obviously, this is a title which will appeal almost exclusively to fans of the sport (whoever you are), but for us mere plebs, it pales in comparison to the likes of SSX's snowboarding thrills. Still, with slaloms, downhill runs, an assortment of slopes from around the world, lots of real skiers and the ability to unlock new equipment and upgrade your skier's attributes, *Ski Racing 2006* is quite simply as good as skiing games get. But unfortunately for most of us, it's still skiing. **PCZ**

## PCZONE

Graphics Excellent  
Sound Nice 'whooshy' wind sound  
Multiplayer Yep, even split-screen

- ✓ Skis go very fast
- ✓ Entrancing slalom animation...
- ✗ No actual racing
- ✗ No huge ski jumps
- ✗ Skiing

66  
Snow joke





## KNIGHTS OF THE TEMPLE II

Tonight we're gonna party like it's 1399

DEVELOPER Cauldron  
PUBLISHER Playlogic International  
WEBSITE [www.playlogicgames.com](http://www.playlogicgames.com)  
ETA December  
PRICE £14.99

System requirements 2

**M**EDIEVAL, IT WOULD seem, is coming back into fashion – full platemail two-piece suits are now considered retro chic and crappy movies like *A Knight's Tale* and *Black Knight* smear themselves over our silver screens. That said, Cauldron has missed the medieval mark completely, instead concerning itself with awful, I mean *really* awful controls – keyboards are just not welcome here. Trying to play this game with a keyboard is like trying to perform open heart surgery with a baguette and spoons for hands, blindfolded.

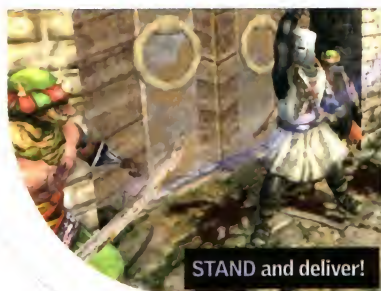
Persevere, explore and allow the game to unfold however, and you'll find that the irritating gameplay failings repeat themselves indefinitely like a string of paper cut-out men, or



some sort of wonderfully asinine kaleidoscope. Levels which don't ask you to fight streams of enemies with nary an ounce of variation in combat styles see you wandering around repetitive and boring areas, fulfilling arbitrary, trite quests and engaging in horribly translated dialogue (sacred bleu, le jeu est Français). What's more, there are levels which do actually force you into hacking and slashing away like it was 1996 which drag on, offering no sense of satisfaction.

There's very little to recommend with this title, besides some pretty visuals and the concept of being a knight. No, this just won't do at all. I wouldn't play this and you shouldn't either.

Steve Hogarty



## WINMAU WORLD DARTS II

Seems you can beat a bit of bully

DEVELOPER Winmau  
PUBLISHER Winmau  
WEBSITE [www.winmau.com](http://www.winmau.com)  
ETA Out now  
PRICE £12.99

System requirements 1

**I**'VE SEEN SOME pointless things in my time. Protective crowd fences at a Delia Smith live cookery show. The second halves of any England friendly. ITV2. But a simulated darts game that requires you to own an actual dartboard in order to take your turn, then asks you to simply enter your scores (no cheating now!) while a computer player throws randomly at a semi-3D board is right up there.

Unfair, as there is a virtual throw mode, akin to the mouse-swing methods seen in most modern golf games, which does sort of work once you get the hang of it. But mostly there is little to interest either the casual darts fan – who would be far better off popping down the local ale emporium and having a game for real



(especially now they're open all night long, hooray for Blair's continental-style Britain) – or the hardcore darts fanatic, who will already have a basement decked out with board, oche, fake bar and rack of peanuts obscuring a poster of a 1985-era Page Three girl.

Oh, don't be swayed by the fact it seems to have a PC ZONE 'endorsement' on the box. "As featured in..." essentially refers to the Reality Check we ran months ago. Hardly the most ringing endorsement. Basically, buy a dartboard. I've heard Winmau sells them.

Paul Presley







CAREFUL, Connery.

## SEA WOLVES:

### SUBMARINES ON HUNT

Grammar wasn't a priority in WWII

**DEVELOPER** X1 Software  
**PUBLISHER** G2 Games  
**WEBSITE** [www.g2games.com](http://www.g2games.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £19.99

**System requirements** 

**G**IVEN THE HEAPS of praise, er, heaped upon *Silent Hunter III* by all and sundry when it arrived last year, I'll bet you thought that it was an accurate simulation of life on board a German U-Boat during the WWII. Hah! More fool you, simpleton. Given the changes *Seawolves*, an unofficial, non-endorsed expansion pack makes to the game, it might as well have been an arcade shooter set during a Martian invasion in the year 3943 AD.

Comedy exaggeration aside, *Seawolves* adds plenty to the sub sim du jour both above the board and under the bonnet. Naval bases now feel like busy ports rather than empty safe points. Japan puts in an appearance in a new set of missions. Campaigns are given more variety in mission types and structure. US Navy missions can be attempted (albeit in German submarines, due to limitations on ability to change the game code). Radio messages ping back and forth from friendly forces around the ocean, painting a picture of gripping conflict and drama at sea. Cups have slanted bases to prevent spillage. Plenty for the hardcore crowd to savour.

None of it is in any way essential, of course. But



"YOU'VE put soot on these haven't you?"



NO, we go in the other direction.

like the neon strips for your nitro-boosted Ford Crapmobile, that extra model hedge set for your attic train set, or hats, sometimes it's not about essentialness, more about desire.

Paul Presley




FLAMETHROWER Barbie causes more trouble.

## THE SIMS 2: CHRISTMAS PARTY PACK

Twass the shite before Christmas

**DEVELOPER** Maxis  
**PUBLISHER** EA  
**WEBSITE** [thesims2.ea.com](http://thesims2.ea.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £9.99

**System requirements** 

**T**HERE'S SOMETHING **WRONG** here: at the time of writing it's the beginning of December and you won't be reading this until the beginning of January, by which time *The Sims 2: Christmas Party Pack* will have completed its sole mission of boldly taking up a whole bloody shelf in every games store across the planet and finding its way into the Christmas stockings of young *Sims* fans, via undiscerning mothers who simply don't know any better.

Simply put, I'm powerless to stop this expansion selling – come to think of it, I could have reviewed this expansion in July and it still wouldn't have any effect on its sales. Reviewing *Sims* expansions is like attacking a tank with a chicken-stuffing sandwich – you just can't make a dent.

Anyway, for your tenner you get 40 Christmas objects, a bit of Santa, some Father Time (for New Year's), a



ROLL on Easter.



MUMMY'S kissing more than Santa.

penny and a receipt which proves you're a chump. Most of the objects can be downloaded from the *Sims 2* website anyway, so you're being shafted left, right and centre.

This is a veritable spit-roast of shaftage – why not buy something nice for an elderly relative instead? Or adopt a dog or some unfortunate orphan with a disease? I must admit though, I laughed when my single father who'd scraped the bottom of his wallet for a Christmas tree had it burn down in an accident which claimed his son's life. Merry Christmas everyone.

Steve Hogarty





# RollerCoaster TYCOON 3 WILD!

EXPERIENCE THE LATEST EXTREME COASTERS  
AND THE MOST HEART-PUMPING RIDES YET

CONQUER 12 Wild! SCENARIOS AND  
NEW JUNGLE AND PREHISTORIC DESIGN THEMES

USE BILLBOARDS WITH YOUR OWN CONTENT  
TO CUSTOMISE YOUR PARK

CHOREOGRAPH FEROCIOUS LIONS  
AND TIGERS IN ASTOUNDING ANIMAL SHOWS

PREVENT ANIMAL ESCAPES - BUT HAVE YOUR DART  
GUN READY JUST IN CASE



www.pegi.info



[WWW.ROLLERCOASTERTYCOON.COM](http://WWW.ROLLERCOASTERTYCOON.COM)



FRONTIER



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SO frightening, it'll turn you ginger.



LOOK! Lollipop trees!



NICE arse.

# ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: WILD!

Michael Filby takes a walk on the wild side



DEVELOPER Frontier  
PUBLISHER Atari  
WEBSITE  
www.rollercoastertycoon.com  
ETA Out now  
PRICE £19.99



## AT A GLANCE...

RollerCoaster Tycoon meets Zoo Tycoon in this second expansion pack to the complex theme park sim.

System requirements

4

## HOW IT STACKS

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3 79%

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: WILD! 72%

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: SOAKED! 72%

**B**EING IN POSSESSION of somewhat disturbed minds, the promise of adding animals into a theme park compelled us to see just how wild *Wild!* actually is. So, we loaded up a crowded park, purchased the most vicious-looking tiger we could find, then dropped it right into the middle of a busy queue. The box opened, the peeps screamed, the tiger chased them, and... That was it. No blood. No dismemberment. Just a lot of running. After unsuccessfully trying to get the carnivores to eat the herbivores by sticking them in the same pen, we resigned ourselves to the fact that we were going to have to get our heads back into a more cerebral mode. Pah.

## MONKEY NUTS

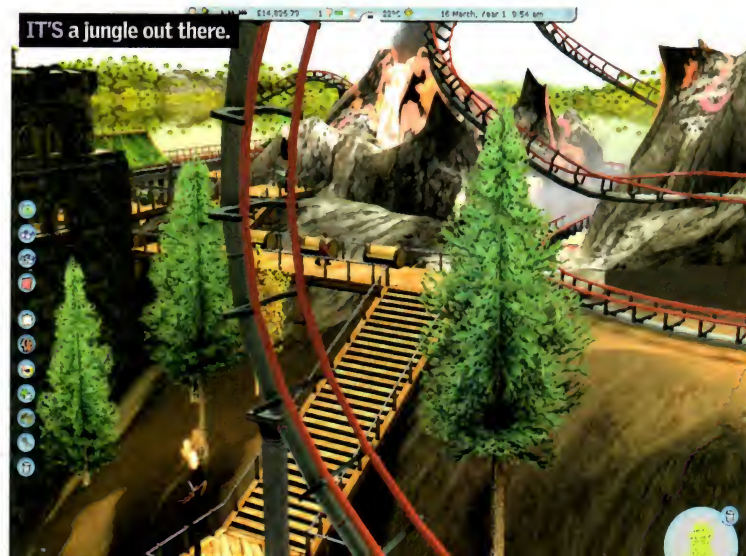
*Wild!* is the second expansion pack for *RCT3*, the first being *Soaked!* (issue 158, 72%) which arrived around six months ago. The major new additions there were the swimming pool complexes and water shows, whereas *Wild!* introduces the option to turn your theme park into a quasi-zoo. Getting some animals in is a thankfully simple affair involving little more than building a pen and viewing area, then

dumping some creatures inside for your visiting cash-cows to gawp at.

A new level of micro-management (as if the game needed yet another) is added in the form of hiring animal keepers to keep the beasts fed and cleaned, and the frequency of feeding times can also be bumped up to draw in the crowds. As well as having dollops of shit in addition to the punters' vomit to clean up now, you've also got to keep an eye on all sorts of stats relating to how happy your animals are, giving them some company or toys to play with if they're not faring too well. Ever seen

an ostrich kicking a beach ball to a rhino? Buy this, and you will.

The pack brings with it another set of campaign missions, inevitably along with another batch of tutorials that are thankfully less painful than the previous lot. The coaster-cam has been extended to the animals, so you can finally satisfy that aching desire to know how a mandrill spends its days. Also, more customisability



IT'S a jungle out there.



## Swing out sister

Breakout



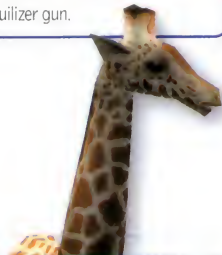
has been added in the shape of billboards that can stream advertising from the Internet. Why anybody would want to do that is anyone's guess, but the option to import your own photos or rude drawings instead makes the feature more worthwhile.

## WET AND WILD

If you've yet to purchase *Soaked!*, it's worth bearing in mind that a few of its features have been included here, and in some cases improved, such as the ability to tunnel into sloping ground. As a whole, *Wild!* doesn't bring anywhere near as many new complications as its predecessor did to what's already a relatively heavy-going game, and that counts in its favour for our money.

Nevertheless, the hundreds of tiny icons that lead to more tiny icons which make up the crux of the annoyingly fiddly interface still hasn't been addressed, and the needlessness of its complexity is only highlighted by the splendidly intuitive system recently seen in *The Movies*. This fact alone is unlikely to put off *RCT3*'s die-hard fan base, who'll find plenty to enjoy here. It'll take more than some monkeys playing with themselves to win over any new fans to the series though, even if you can shoot at them. **PC**

Whereas *Soaked!* gave you the option to hose down your park's punters when you got tired of looking at their gormless faces, *Wild!* goes one better – you can set your animals on them. If an escape occurs, usually through your perimeter fences failing, you can take to the skies in a helicopter and use a sniper rifle to fire tranquilizer darts at the rampaging beast. Once subdued, it can be shifted back into its pen. Sadly, none of the carnivores go so far as tearing the park visitors to pieces, although you can take a few pot-shots at them instead of the animals with your tranquilizer gun.



## PCZONE

Graphics **Shiny but demanding**  
Sound **Rainforest Café**  
Multiplayer **None**

- ✓ Most new elements simply executed
- ✓ Sniping animals is a winner
- ✓ Includes some of *Soaked!*'s features
- ✗ Surprisingly demanding graphics engine
- ✗ Still plays like a modding tool
- ✗ A fiver too expensive

# 72

Animal magic



## WORLD POKER CHAMPIONSHIP

Hold 'em, fold 'em, nab 'im, grab 'im...

DEVELOPER GSP  
PUBLISHER GSP  
WEBSITE [www.gsp.cc](http://www.gsp.cc)  
ETA Out now  
PRICE £9.99

### System requirements 1

**A** HANDY LITTLE TIP for anyone setting out to make a poker game on the PC.

The key to recreating an absorbing session of the world's second favourite card game (Go Johnny, Go, Go, Go obviously takes the crown) is to have opponents that actually show some semblance of personality.

You see, poker is about more than just playing the odds. It's about body language. It's about reading the facial cues of the guy sitting across from you as he suddenly draws a six of diamonds to his outside low straight and tries to suppress the flash of hope in his eyes. It's about the human condition.

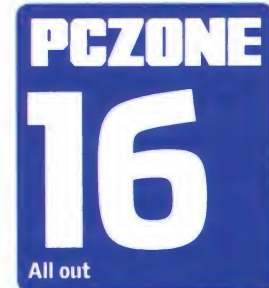
What poker is not about is playing against a table of identikit automatons who rigidly stick to playing the established odds, never take a chance, happily fold a pair of kings after



drawing a third on the flop just because you raise by five dollars, and can be beaten on *any* hand simply by raising the betting to over a thousand dollars no matter what.

Unfortunately, that appears to be the GSC/*World Poker Championship* definition of poker, and as such it's as piss-poor a simulation of the game as it's possible to get. And one last moan: if you're going to have a game that lets you bet in excess of thousands of dollars, it might be an idea to have a system that lets you type in the amount of the bet, rather than forcing you to click a *hundred f\*\*\*ing times* to get anywhere near the high numbers. You know, just a suggestion.

Paul Presley







# STAR WARS GALAXIES: NGE

Richie Shoemaker is waiting outside the bacta tank as *Star Wars* online emerges reborn



**DEVELOPER** Sony Online Entertainment  
**PUBLISHER** LucasArts  
**WEBSITE** [www.starwarsgalaxies.com](http://www.starwarsgalaxies.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** Free 10-day trial download, £8.65 (approx.) monthly subscription

## AT A GLANCE...

Join the cast of *Star Wars* and thousands of other Jedi wannabes on a streamlined quest to reinstate the old Republic, or impose a new order on the galaxy.

### System requirements

3

### HOW IT STACKS

WORLD OF WARCRAFT 95%

EVE ONLINE 91%

STAR WARS GALAXIES 68%

**F**OR ME, IT all went wrong within five minutes after walking into the Dune Sea. After taking a few steps I met my first foe, a small crab-like creature. Me, a trained scout with a blaster against an upturned cereal bowl on legs. It took ten shots to fell the ceramic menace, plus a lot of running away. This didn't feel right at all. Then a wookiee came running towards me, his face shot through with panic and fear as an entire dinner service gave chase. This wasn't *Star Wars*. This was *French & Saunders* (ie, not funny).

Downcast, I searched for a bar. The cantina looked promising and the band returned a faint smile to my parched lips. Until I spied a troupe of wookiees playing air guitar and pole-dancing.

It was horrible, like a fan convention in a theme park. Admittedly, I'd only been riding the teacups, but *Star Wars* games, even the bad ones, have always at least tried to push you onto the rollercoaster as soon as you get in the door.

## WORLD OF STAR WARS WARCRAFT

Well, now the rollercoaster has been relocated and the teacups have been dismantled. Where for years you were

forced to graft to earn the right to even lick the boots of characters like Han Solo and Boba Fett, straight away you feel as if you really are part of some grand quest to liberate or enslave the galaxy. This is what Sony is calling its New Game Enhancements, its quest to integrate players more into the myth of the movies. It's a move brought about in response to *World Of Warcraft*'s sudden ascension as the ultimate online power in the universe. Yes, in *WOW* you're

just another subscriber, but the illusion is real – you're a hero too. Thanks to some sweeping changes, you can be a hero in *Galaxies* – just sign-up, pick a career and there you are aboard the Millennium Falcon, swapping quips with Solo and blasting TIE Fighters out of the sky. Woo-hoo!

## DON'T GET COCKY KID

In effect, what Sony has done is streamline the game. From 23 previous professions





DIXONS has gone a bit downhill.

## To disillusioned traditionalists like myself, *Galaxies* is like the game it should have been

there now are just nine. Gone are the artisans, image designers and pistolers. Instead, we have hybrid 'iconic' professions, an all-in-one combat specialist, the trader in place of the various craftsmen and the all-important and now absolutely bloody everywhere Jedi.

The biggest change is with regard to the combat. Discarded is the macro-friendly method of targeting and queuing up moves. Instead, you aim your crosshair and press fire. It's not the full FPS monty – position and hit locations are barely a consideration, and as an overall twitch-based combat system, the *Battlefront* series does it all much better. But the immediacy and fun of *Star Wars* is present and pretty much correct, and you get the *Jump To Lightspeed* add-on included for free. So what more could you ask for?

The answer to that depends on how long you've been p()aying. Had you patiently spent three years waiting in line to ride the rollercoaster, you'd be pretty pissed off if the security guards pulled you out and stuck you back at the entrance. Yet that's how many veterans feel. Entire classes have been taken out, others absorbed without consultation



or due notice, meaning it's the most specialised of all – the dedicated veterans – that have been shafted. One must feel for those patient padawans who've been learning the ways of the Force, only to wake up to find they could have been playing something else for the past few years. In short, even if they were as necessary as Sony makes out, such wholesale changes could and should have been managed better.

## GALAXY OF HEROES

To disillusioned traditionalists like myself, *Galaxies* is now more like the game it should have been. The *NGE* is a new start; a harsh and evidently difficult attempt to gut out all that was unwieldy. The refurbishment is impressive, but behind the sprinkling of movie magic there remains evidence of faulty wiring and patches of bare plaster. Lag is ever-present in popular areas, the whole thing fades to grind past level 30 and the game is less social than it was because new players are effectively forced to play

solo for the first hours, in which case you may as well be in the Old Republic.

But this is *Star Wars*, and an online persistent *Star Wars* at that, one that's far more approachable and immediate than it ever was. I could preach to you the endless depth of *EVE Online*, the casual immediacy of *World Of Warcraft* or the camp gloriousness of *City Of Heroes*, but as we all know, there's no substitute for a good blaster at your side. As MMOGs go, *Galaxies* is finally starting to make good on its potential. **PCZ**



## A Hive Of Scum And Villainy

The mechanics have changed, but is anything else new?



Underneath the recent changes, *Star Wars Galaxies* offers the same scenario as it did three years ago. It's still set roughly between *Episodes IV* and *V*, and you can either remain neutral or undertake missions to fight for the Empire or the Rebel Alliance. The characters that were once only rolled out for special occasions are now ubiquitous. As an interactive tour-guide through the *Star Wars* series, it's everything you could hope for. As an online virtual world of depth and scope, it's a bit limited.

## PCZONE

Graphics Still up to scratch  
Sound Typically excellent  
Multiplayer *Star Wars* fanfare – voiceovers are especially good  
Leads you in gently, but the populated areas are a lagfest

- ✓ More *Star Wars*-y
- ✓ Free add-on included
- ✓ Good for newcomers
- ✗ Less complex
- ✗ Not as social as it was
- ✗ A bad deal for veterans

# 68

A new hope for some, but not for most others



# indiezone

You won't find any of these indie games in the shops, but you can download them or get trial versions on our DVD.



Football, space travel and cunning stunts are all in a day's work for **Martin Korda** as he delves into the world of indie games



BEFORE you start, you have to earn yourself a contract.

## NEW STAR SOCCER 3

DEVELOPER New Star Games WEBSITE [www.newstarsoccer.com/nss3.htm](http://www.newstarsoccer.com/nss3.htm)  
PRICE \$19.95 (£11.60)



AFTER each match you'll be given ratings and even newspaper reviews.

INDIEZONE  
GAME  
OF THE  
MONTH

**WHAT A GREAT** game this is. Seriously. Imagine *Sensible Soccer* meets *Football Manager* meets *Goal* (the film), and you have a rough idea of what's involved. As a wannabe football star, you must lead your player through his entire career, both on and off the pitch.

There are loads of real-life leagues to play in, while every squad is about as close to its real-life counterpart as you could hope for. Playing in your preferred position in matches is both incredibly entertaining and hugely challenging, especially as your player starts off with some pretty poor stats that can only be improved through training. Perform badly, become unfit or lose confidence and you'll soon find yourself warming the bench.



PLAY in defence, midfield or up front.

Off the pitch, you have to strike a balance between your work, leisure and family time, but while these features are fun, they're a little basic. With a better match engine and some more off-field depth, this could easily be a huge commercial hit. For now though, it'll just have to content itself with being Indie Game Of The Month.

PCZONE  
75

## STUNT ISLAND

DEV ForgeFX WEB [www.stuntisland.com](http://www.stuntisland.com)  
PRICE \$19.95 (£11.60)

**DAVE MIRRA AND** co won't be losing any sleep over this one, that's for sure. While *Stunt Island* is competent enough in the graphics department, the same can't be said

for the gameplay, which is so simplistic it makes even the most challenging stunt feel about as taxing as riding a tricycle. Only thing is, riding a kiddie's three-wheeler is probably more fun.

Rarely if ever do you feel as though you're being challenged, while the iffy collision detection saps away even more of the game's limited fun factor. The sound isn't up to much either, with your rider's comments proving so irritating, you just want to spoke the little shit in the hope that he falls off his bike and bites his tongue off.

On the plus side, there are plenty of cool power-ups to collect, which, along with some clever level design helps transform an otherwise mediocre game into a mildly entertaining 20-minute distraction.



LOOK mum, no hands.



PCZONE  
50



# WEIRD WORLDS: RETURN TO INFINITE SPACE

**DEVELOPER** Shrapnel Games **WEB** [www.shrapnelgames.com](http://www.shrapnelgames.com)  
**PRICE** \$24.95 (£14.50)

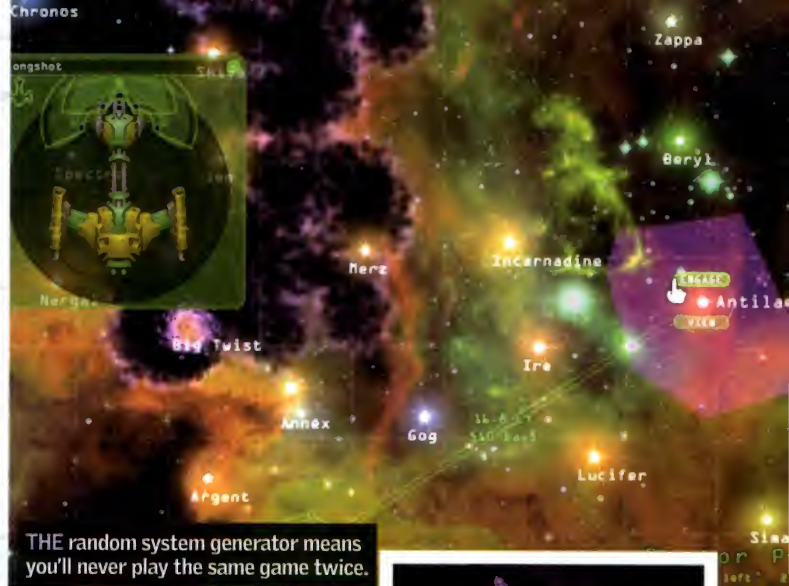
**STRATEGIC SPACE EXPLORATION** games are all around, but *Weird Worlds: Return To Infinite Space* is certainly among the better ones.

Thanks to a random system generator, you can be sure things don't get too samey as you travel through the void, trading, exploring, fighting and completing missions to boost your reputation and bank balance.

There are countless planets and technologies to discover, and while the

slow strategic gameplay may not appeal to everyone, turn-based fans will certainly find some enjoyment here.

Best of all though is the excellent combat, which sees you and your enemies slugging it out with an impressive array of weaponry. Just watching these intergalactic skirmishes is a real pleasure, as lasers bite into hulls with genuine ferocity and ships try to outmanoeuvre each other.



THE random system generator means you'll never play the same game twice.

While we may have seen it all before, the thrilling combat does just enough to put *Weird Worlds* above the rest.

**PCZONE**  
**62**



## TANK-O-BOX

**DEVELOPER** Exclusive Games  
**WEB** [www.tank-o-box.com](http://www.tank-o-box.com)  
**PRICE** \$19.95 (£11.60)

**GAMES LIKE TANK-O-BOX** piss me off. No, not because they're lazy rehashes of old ideas, but because they're totally overpriced for what they are.

This is the kind of basic arcade shooter, replete with upgrades and ever more powerful tanks, that should be available for a fiver at the very most, so that the max amount people can enjoy it for what it is – a brief but explosive distraction.

At this price though, it simply isn't worth the bother. The AI is incredibly basic, and it's far too easy to just bulldoze your way through most of the



levels, which task you with driving a tank and destroying all the enemies before they destroy you or your base.

At close to 12 quid, we can't recommend it – but if it dropped to a fiver, it'd be just about worth the investment.

**PCZONE**  
**44**

## Developer Q&A



**RAYMOND F JACOBS**  
**OWNER / PRODUCER / DEVELOPER**  
**COMPANY** Ethereal Darkness Interactive  
**WEBSITE** [www.etherealdarkness.com](http://www.etherealdarkness.com)  
**GAMES** Morning's Wrath

**PCZ** Tell us about your company...

**RAYMOND** We're committed to delivering high-quality games that are the realisation of a vision. We believe game development is an art.

**PCZ** What's your ethos towards making indie games?

**RAYMOND** Indie games should be developed through honest practices, and in ways that best compliment the game's essence.

**PCZ** What advice would you give budding indie games developers?

**RAYMOND** Never stop trying. Creating a professional-quality game is very long and hard work. Be dedicated, learn all you can and eventually you will come out on top.

**PCZ** Where do you hope developing indie games will lead?

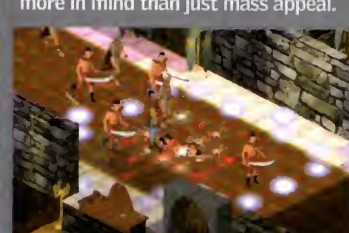
**RAYMOND** With the dwindling creativity of the games industry, I hope indie game development will serve as a return to when games were about fun, not about graphics quality and frame-rates.

**PCZ** Best thing about indie gaming?

**RAYMOND** The ability to revisit a bygone or innovative genre, and to know a game was designed with more in mind than just mass appeal.



NICE rugs, a steal at £1799.





# BUDGET

Hard up? *Paul Presley* softens the blow on your bank account

## COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES & COMMANDOS: BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY DOUBLE-PACK

PUBLISHER Sold Out WEBSITE [www.sold-out.co.uk](http://www.sold-out.co.uk) PRICE £4.99

APPARENTLY THERE WAS a formula for winning WWII that, had it been known at the time, could have saved hundreds of thousands of (non-Nazi) lives and had the war done, dusted and back in its box within months rather than however long it really took (I can't say for sure, I didn't see the film).

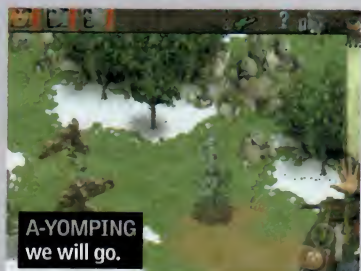
Anyway, the formula goes like this: use a spy to dress up as an enemy officer and distract each Nazi soldier you come across + sneak up behind befuddled soldier with a green beret + silent knife kill then hide body behind a wall, repeat as needed = flawless victory against spreading threat from the Fatherland. Apparently we didn't have good enough

**BUDGET  
GAME  
OF THE  
MONTH**

scientists to figure it out at the time, but hopefully that'll help you out in the future should we ever go to war again against someone (not much chance of that I'd have thought).

Anyway, that's the formula for war and that's the formula for *Commandos* – you were wondering when I'd mention the game, weren't you? At least the later version of the series anyway. This double-pack harks back to a time when it was still a challenging romp through impressive war-torn maps. Think *Lemmings* with guns and you're close to the mark. Highly recommended.

**PCZONE  
75**



## MICROSOFT TRAIN SIMULATOR

PUBLISHER Xplosiv WEBSITE [www.microsoft.com/games/trainsimulator](http://www.microsoft.com/games/trainsimulator) PRICE £9.99



THE SCAMPY LITTLE imp in me wanted to make this Budget Game Of The Month, but having already angered Will by putting X2 ahead of *Far Cry* a couple of issues ago, my saner head has won out and I'll relegate it to here instead.

Train fans! How we mock them with their duffle coats, weak lemon drinks, secure sense of community spirit, abundance of like-minded friends and unrelentingly upbeat approach to life...

Hmmm, well, that notwithstanding, you wouldn't catch real men playing with trains when they could be pretending to be alien warriors or SAS soldiers or, er, sneaky

spies who spend most of their lives hiding in shadows. This isn't going very well is it? Basically, it's a simulation of train driving and it's not half bad.

**PCZONE  
74**



**THIS  
MONTH  
PCZONE  
SAVED MONEY BY...**

Will finding a newsagent selling three Alpen bars for the price of two:  
Saving: 55p

Blagging a free dartboard = now no need to go to the pub:  
Saving: £130 a night by London's drinking prices

Bulk-buying Xbox 360s then reselling on eBay:  
Saving: 30-70% markup, depending on gullibility



# ZOO TYCOON

PUBLISHER Xplosiv WEBSITE [www.zootycoon.com](http://www.zootycoon.com) PRICE £4.99



**I'LL BE THE** first to admit that I don't regularly keep up-to-date with the business pages of the *Hillingdon Evening Echo*, but even with my limited knowledge of the financial world, I'm pretty sure that most modern-day 'tycoons' have little to do with zookeeping. I don't remember Alan Sugar getting any of his contestants to

muck out the penguin shed, or seeing Donald Trump exhort the virtues of restocking the rare iguana cages. Maybe I missed those episodes. Nonetheless, *Zoo Tycoon* is the first of the two games to sport the moniker and, well, it isn't really much cop. Basic management larks while keeping visitors to the snake pens and monkey houses smiling. And raking in the cash. It's all about the cash. Sigh. When did we stop caring about collecting magic stars and rescuing princesses? It's all gotten a bit too commercial around here.

**PCZONE**  
**41**

# BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS 2: TRUCK ME HARDER

PUBLISHER Xplosiv WEBSITE [www.bigmuthatruckers2.com](http://www.bigmuthatruckers2.com) PRICE £9.99

**NOW THAT'S COMEDY.** Puns, sexual innuendo, allusions to swearing, redneck stereotyping – it's not often a single game manages to straddle the entire spectrum of low-rent humour in one sweeping bound. Just a pity it had to be in this lacklustre arcade truck driving nonsense instead of the latest tour de force by Warren Spector or Will Wright or someone. *Sid Meier's Trucking Hell*, anyone?

Anyway, cartoon capers abound as you race across country for some reason or another, smashing smaller

vehicles aplenty, dodging the po-leece and pretending that South Carolina references mean anything to you. It's all mildly diverting in the same way that a report on Ukranian circus children putting on a charity show on your local news bulletin would be.



**PCZONE**  
**55**



## And the rest...

Old games + cheap prices = budget heaven (or hell)



**MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2002**  
£9.99, Xplosiv  
Dated and uncharacteristically flawed chapter in the never-ending aviation series, famed at the time after being blamed for training terrorists in the 9/11 attacks. Later versions arrived sans Twin Towers.

**PCZONE**  
**56**



**GANGSTERS I & II DOUBLE PACK**  
£4.99, Sold Out  
Two failed attempts to bring the world of the mafiosi to the medium of RTS games in one giant package. Best to save your money and find a copy of *Mafia* instead. Or wait for *The Godfather*, which actually promises to be quite good.

**PCZONE**  
**61**



**COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2**  
£9.99, Xplosiv  
More Microsoft flying fun and isn't it amazing how quickly the old flight sims have aged? WWII Pacific action, which isn't bad but does feel somewhat cold and antiseptic in the long run.

**PCZONE**  
**52**

## PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET BUYS



**1 FAR CRY**  
£9.99, Mastertronic  
Better than *Half-Life 2*? So some say. The best non-gravity gun shooter of recent years anyway. An island paradise with extra explosions and terrific enemy AI.



**2 X2: THE THREAT**  
£9.99, White Label  
Begone *Freelancer*! The real space sim starts here – on budget anyway (*X3* is better yet but costs more). Freedom among the stars. Could life be better?



**3 BEYOND GOOD & EVIL**  
£9.99, Focus Multimedia  
Glorious story-telling, engaging gameplay and the greenest lips in all of gaming-dom make the ever-overlooked *BG&E* a must-buy. Deep, imaginative, brilliant.



**4 SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII**  
£12.99, Codemasters  
One of the finest strategy titles of recent years, *Soldiers* is a near-perfect blend of tactical thought, balls-out action and historical accuracy.



**5 BLACK & WHITE**  
£4.99, Sold Out  
Molyneux's opus split opinion on release, but at this price you can't fault its ambition and gameplay. Monkey slapping has never been so cheap.






# Make it a PIPEX Christmas

Make PIPEX Broadband top of your list of Christmas essentials this coming season!

From FREE home phone calls to a FREE Golf lesson, the PIPEX Christmas Special has something for all the family. This superfast 2Mb broadband package is just £14.99 a month and includes 2 months of free broadband, a free modem, free set-up and 500 minutes of inclusive home phone calls every month.\*

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- Free Family Portrait
- Free Anti-virus and Firewall for 12 months
- Free  **napster**® 1 month's unlimited access to 1.6m+ music tracks

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# YOUR SHOUT!

Speak your brains on the latest releases



## THE MOVIES

OUR SCORE: 95%

You know a game is good when you've barely left your computer for a day. You know it's great when you constantly think you're still playing, coming up with new movie ideas in your head. *The Movies* is addictive, creative, fun, funny and nigh-on perfect. It sidesteps most *Tycoon* games' shortcomings and introduces some great concepts. Making your own movies is simple and the more you play, the more you unlock, which gives you even more to experiment with. Mixed with an incredible interface and sense of humour, I really haven't enjoyed myself this much in years. Lionhead finally lives up to its potential.

Paul Hoey: **96%**



## F.E.A.R.

OUR SCORE: 90%

I installed *F.E.A.R.* on my PC, settled down and away I went. I have to say this is one seriously good-looking, very well played-out piece of entertainment, and one that surely should sit higher in the FPS chart. This is more entertaining than many big-budget movies. It has glorious visuals, flowing gameplay, superlative sound, plus it gave me more cases of the willies than a box full of Ben Dover DVDs. It made the outlay on my 6800GT graphics card worthwhile.

Anth Roberts: **91%**

## Review of the Month



## PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5

OUR SCORE: 93%

How to make a good football game better? Let's start first by fixing the erratic passing system, by making it similar to the old one. Then let's improve the keepers so that they actually try and save a few balls rather than jumping in place, just like the old system. Then let's get attackers to hit something other than the middle, just like the year before. What about the auto-change player system, why don't we make it actually work rather than have it randomly change to useless players. I don't know about you, but to me, *PES5* seems like a step down from its older iteration, except for that Internet play thing. Ironically enough, it looks very similar to *FIFA 2002*, a good game that used to lose out to *PES*. Is it a conspiracy? Could it be that Konami wasn't able to improve on *PES4*, so it made a step backwards in *PES5*, to improve in *PES6*?

Roger Kahwagi: **83%**



## BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD

OUR SCORE: 85%

I don't think your review was right. In my view, *Earned In Blood* is a whole lot better than *Road To Hill 30* – the AI is great. In one case, I was moving to a wall and the Germans flanked me as I was moving. The graphics are better, the whole brotherhood thing is improved and the multiplayer is superior too, both online and off. Simply, it's better in every way.

Kyle McCrann: **90%**

## PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5

OUR SCORE: 93%

It amazes me to think that a magazine of your years and reputation would rate



this game as a classic. As an incredibly accurate representation of soccer, this game is spot-on. It couldn't simulate bad refereeing, terrible tackling and the stunning lack of goals any better. As an enjoyable game, however, it misses the mark completely. It may just be sour grapes on my part for being crap at it, but the appalling AI and the insane difficulty jump from one level to the next make this game just recommendable, at best.

Aidan Connolly: **72.5%**

## YOU DO THE REVIEWS!

Agree? Disagree? Well, the world wouldn't be the wonderful place it was if we all thought the same way. If you fancy sharing your own thoughts with your fellow readers, then jot them down: (we find the recent advancements in parchment and ink technology to be handy), trim the amount of words to a MAXIMUM of 100, add a score out of 100 then send them to the address below. If we think they're worthy of sharing, we'll print them here. Better yet, one will be awarded our coveted Review Of The Month award and showered with a gift of some description.

Send your reviews to: yourshout@pczone.co.uk, or stick them in an envelope and post them to: PC ZONE, Your Shout, Future, 1 Balcombe Street, London, NW1 6NA.





# BUYER'S GUIDE

The best of the best, categorised for your viewing pleasure



## PCZONE TOP 5 SUDOKU GAMES

- 1 THE SUDOKU CHALLENGE
- 2 INFINITE SUDOKU
- 3 PUZZLER SUDOKU
- 4 SUDOKU PROFESSIONAL
- 5 CAROL VORDERMAN'S SUDOKU



## PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES - WILL PORTER

- 1 FALLOUT 2  
PCZ ISSUE: 71
- 2 DEUS EX  
PCZ ISSUE: 93
- 3 HALF-LIFE  
PCZ ISSUE: 71
- 4 DUKE NUKEM 3D  
PCZ ISSUE: 40
- 5 FAR CRY  
PCZ ISSUE: 140

## PCZONE TOP 5 GAME TITLE PORNALIKES

- 1 CALL OF BOOY 2: BIG RED ONE
- 2 PENIS JACKS' EM'S KING DONG
- 3 WORLD OF WHORECRAFT
- 4 BLACK ON WHITE 2
- 5 DAY OF SEX: INVISIBLE WHORES



## Shooters

Must buy!



### HALF-LIFE 2

PCZ Issue: 148 - 97%

Everyone knew this would be good, but no-one quite expected the tour de force that Valve managed to pull off. Easily a contender for the best game of all time, *Half-Life 2* is just one stunning set-piece after another, and is guaranteed to leave you dribbling with awe. Be warned though, a (fast) online connection is needed for Valve's mandatory Steam delivery service.



### BATTLEFIELD 2

PCZ Issue: 157 - 94%

If it's online action you want, look no further. *BF2* sets the gold standard for team-based shooting, with huge 64-player maps, squad and commander modes and the best graphics ever. Just make sure you have a ninja PC.



### BUDGET

### FAR CRY

PCZ Issue: 140 - 93%

In many eyes, Crytek's shooter outweighs even the mighty *Half-Life 2* in its tension, tactics and expansive level design. It's a mighty achievement with seemingly freeform action and the best sniping money can buy.



### CALL OF DUTY 2

PCZ Issue: 162 - 91%

Brutal, relentless and totally gripping, the WWII shooter sequel packs more action into a single level than most pack into an entire game. Epic scale battles and intense drama. World War II at its unforgiving best.



### UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

PCZ Issue: 138 - 91%

*UT2004* packs so much punch, you'd be hard pushed to find a flaw. Team games, deathmatches, tactical thinking in the Onslaught mode - everything the sci-fi shoot 'em up fan could want.



### F.E.A.R.

PCZ Issue: 160 - 90%

With more shocks and scares than an episode of *Reantghost* (and a much higher body count), *F.E.A.R.* pushes the shooter part of FPS to the limit. It might not be the scariest game ever, but it will make you jump.



### SWAT 4

PCZ Issue: 154 - 86%

*SWAT 4* is a tactical squad shooter that sings. Dark in places, brutal in others, it's the only shooter that allows you to tazer old ladies and drown them in pepper spray. Probably the best co-op experience around to boot.

## Strategy

Must buy!



### ROME: TOTAL WAR

PCZ Issue: 148 - 93%

Once upon a time, all strategy games were visual abortions and strictly for the hardcore (OK, a bit of a sweeping statement). But *Rome: Total War* changed all that, mixing breathtaking 3D with troop numbers reminiscent of a Hollywood epic, as well as staggering historical accuracy. The result is a masterpiece and a game just about anyone can enjoy. Hell, how many other titles are made into TV shows?



### THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH

PCZ Issue: 149 - 91%

Although the *LOTR* RTS doesn't hold a candle to the *Total War* franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrag around for guaranteed strategy fun.

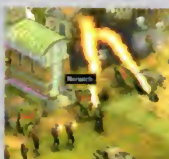


### BUDGET

### SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II

PCZ Issue: 144 - 90%

The strategy of *Commandos* meets the fun of *Cannon Fodder* in this top-down game of tactics. Being the underdog has never been so much fun, and the rumble of tanks never so worrying.



### RISE OF NATIONS

PCZ Issue: 129 - 90%

One of the best of the 'last generation' of Empire builders, *Rise of Nations* - coupled with exemplary expansion pack *Thrones And Patriots* - is a uniquely satisfying and addictive treatment of the *Civ* genre.



### SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

PCZ Issue: 149 - 88%

If you've got some downtime at the close of the day, then *Pirates!* is the most relaxing (and swashbuckling) game around. Drifting around the Caribbean with a flotilla of ships and mischief on your mind is escapism at its finest.



### GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS

PCZ Issue 143 - 84%

Despite a few AI glitches, *GCI* is a great game if you prefer tactics to boring old resource management. A superb sci-fi effort with some intense freeform missions. Strat-fans should check it out.



### AGE OF EMPIRES III

PCZ Issue: 162 - 84%

A sprinkling of innovation and a barrelful of lushness lets us give this hearty endorsement, even though it doesn't stray far from the established formula. Still the best 'new world' game, and the best RTS cannons ever.

## Action/Adventure

Must buy!



### MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

The chosen poison for certain PCZ staffers after a long hard day, Payne's second outing is perhaps the most pixel-perfect example of joy-through-excessive-destruction on the market. Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense, well designed and replayable that you just won't care.



### GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

PCZ Issue: 155 - 92%

To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this - a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smutty, freeform and hilarious - *San Andreas* is the summit of gaming achievement.



### SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

PCZ Issue 154 - 91%

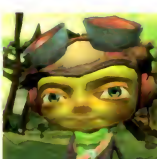
A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Chaos Theory* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well-established spies vs mercenaries multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.



### FAHRENHEIT

PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%

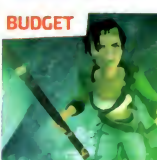
Murder most foul, with you as the killer. This twisting, turning, brilliantly-told plot features multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.



### PSYCHONAUTS

PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker - *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



### BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillis is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



### THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS

PCZ Issue: 144 - 85%

*Deadly Shadows* not only brings *Thief's* sneak-and-steal mantra bang up-to-date, but also has some of the best level design in living memory. Play through *The Cradle* and you'll know true fear.



## MMOs



**Must buy!**  
**EVERQUEST II**  
PCZ Issue: 150 - 95%  
A *Star Trek* to *WoW*'s *Star Wars*, *EQII* gives the original a much needed lick of paint, a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A time-sink in the true, classic sense.



**WORLD OF WARCRAFT**  
PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%  
Blizzard's recreation of the classic strategy world in MMO form doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to look at, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



**GUILD WARS**  
PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%  
How to make a gaming genre accessible to the masses. It shines with polish, thought and lack of monthly subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home too, thanks to a totally skills-based set-up.



**EVE ONLINE**  
PCZ Issue: 130 - 88%  
*Elite* online has been a long-held fantasy and this space sim is the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining or trading to piracy—it's up to you.



**CITY OF HEROES**  
PCZ Issue: 155 - 86%  
Nothing beats the feeling of spandex and fire-beams shooting from your eyes. This super-powered MMO lets you live all those heroic dreams to the full. Nietzsche would have a field day.

## Sport



**Must buy!**  
**PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5**  
PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%  
Football, football, football. Morning, noon and night. The beautiful game in a beautiful version of *Pro Evo* ever, also the best footy game ever.



**FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006**  
PCZ Issue: 162 - 90%  
One year on and the best footy management game is even better. Quick Tactics, half-time team talks, physio reports - changes are small but add up to a terrific whole.



**TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006**  
PCZ Issue: 161 - 85%  
Travel through time playing Tiger Woods throughout history. Only in an EA Sports game. *Tiger 06* is the best PC golf game yet, mainly thanks to the two career modes.



**NHL 06**  
PCZ Issue: 160 - 84%  
Ice hockey may not be the UK's number one sporting pastime, but that doesn't make EA Sports' incarnation of it any less fun. Exciting, breathless and violent balls-out fun for the whole family.



**MADDEN 2005**  
PCZ Issue: 152 - 84%  
Although the 2006 version is now upon us, this is actually the better option (at least until 2007 arrives). In truth, there's little to differ between the versions, but this one just feels more fluid.

## Simulation



**Must buy!**  
**X3: REUNION**  
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%  
Finally, a space sim to better *X2: The Threat*, and it just happens to be the sequel. Possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Plus, it plays well too.



**IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES**  
PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%  
While flight sims are becoming rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None more so than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Clocks away, comrade!



**MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT**  
PCZ Issue: 133 - 89%  
No, you don't shoot things, no there's no mission structure, yes there's the best non-combat flight experience to date. History can be fun.



**BUDGET**  
**FREELANCER**  
PCZ Issue: 128 - 84%  
If *X2* is too slow for you, *Freelancer* should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.



**FALCON 4.0**  
PCZ Issue: 158 - 82%  
An example of fanbase enthusiasm saving a once-dead series, *Falcon 4.0* lives on thanks to the dedication of its hard-working players. The best modern-day fighter sim on the market.

## Driving/Racing



**Must buy!**  
**GT LEGENDS**  
PCZ Issue: 161 - 92%  
While *GTR* takes care of modern-day racing, *GT Legends* does the business for historical driving. A natural successor to *Grand Prix Legends*, it's like the swinging '60s never ended.



**GTR**  
PCZ Issue: 153 - 90%  
As real as it gets. Probably. The complete driving solution on a PC, with all the drifting, shunting and racing you need. Invest in a decent force-feedback steering wheel and pedals set-up though.



**LIVE FOR SPEED**  
PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%  
Online racing at its best. Realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. On the right servers that is. A remarkable achievement by such a small team.



**TOCA RACE DRIVER 2**  
PCZ Issue: 142 - 89%  
The most comprehensive driving game on the PC, *TOCA 2* is a must-have if you're into motors. 15 different motorsports to master, 52 tracks and rival drivers with top AI snarls.



**NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED**  
PCZ Issue: 163 - 88%  
Thrill-packed racer from EA, this time with the emphasis on high-speed police chases and notoriety factors. You can still make like *Westwood* with the car pimping though.

## God games



**Must buy!**  
**THE MOVIES**  
PCZ Issue: 162 - 95%  
Life as a movie mogul, games don't get better than this. Not only a god/management game par excellence, but also a complete home movie-making kit. Brilliant.



**BLACK & WHITE 2**  
PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%  
The original split opinion, and this sequel does the same. We love it though, and think it's erased all the problems as well as adding plenty of new options to boot. It's gorgeous too.



**CIVILIZATION IV**  
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%  
A Buyer's Guide without a *Civ* game would be a sorry, sorry place, and luckily the latest version does the business with aplomb. Violent Buddhist Romans take over the world.



**EVIL GENIUS**  
PCZ Issue: 147 - 84%  
Ever wanted to say "No Mr Bond, I expect you to die", or create giant evil lairs inside hollow volcanoes? Well now you can with this great megalomaniac sim. It's always fun being bad.



**VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG**  
PCZ Issue: 135 - 84%  
An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of Vegas itself. Provide hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that suck the money out of the punters.

# INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

### February

AMERICAN CONQUEST: DIVIDED NATION AND THEN THERE WERE NONE  
CRASHDAY  
EMPIRE EARTH II: THE ART OF SUPREMACY  
GALACTIC CIVILIZATIONS II  
HAMMER & SICKLE  
LULA 30  
MARC ECKO'S GETTING UP: CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE  
PANZER ELITE ACTION  
SPACE EMPIRES V  
STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR  
STUBBS THE ZOMBIE  
TOCA RACE DRIVER 3

CDV  
ADVENTURE COMPANY  
ATARI  
VU GAMES  
PARADOX INTERACTIVE  
CDV  
CDV  
ATARI  
JOWOOD  
STRATEGY FIRST  
ACTIVISION  
ASPYR  
CODEMASTERS

### March

FACES OF WAR  
LMA MANAGER 2006  
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH II

UBISOFT  
CODEMASTERS  
EA

### Q1 2006

HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC V  
RF ONLINE  
RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR  
SWAT 4 - THE STETCHKOV SYNDICATE

UBISOFT  
CODEMASTERS  
MIDWAY  
VU GAMES

### Q2 2006

AUTO ASSAULT  
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ONLINE: STORMREACH  
GUILD WARS CHAPTER 2  
HEART OF EMPIRE: ROME  
HELLGATE: LONDON  
HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY  
HOTEL GIANT 2  
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2  
PARAWORLD  
PHANTASY STAR UNIVERSE  
RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS  
SPELLFORCE II  
TABULA RASA  
TITAN QUEST

NCSOFT  
CODEMASTERS  
NCSOFT  
DEEP SILVER  
NAMCO  
EIDOS  
JOWOOD  
ATARI  
JOWOOD  
SEGA  
MICROSOFT  
JOWOOD  
NCSOFT  
THQ



# SCIENCE FICTION FAN? GET ONLINE!



**EXCLUSIVE:  
SPOILERS  
FOR LOST**

# WWW.SFX.CO.UK

## THE LEADING SF MAG NOW HAS A WEBSITE!

DAILY NEWS ★ EVENTS LISTING ★ DESKTOP WALLPAPERS  
FEATURES AND REVIEWS ★ EXCLUSIVE COMPETITIONS ★ FORUM

# SFX





PCZONE

## HARDWARE

Better gaming through technology

HARDWARE EDITOR Phil Wand

## Portable plans

**T**HE OTHER WEEK I was reading how the UN plans to equip Africans with PCs, under a scheme known as the \$100 Laptop Initiative. No prizes for guessing what's involved nor how much it's going to cost.

This is, of course, a great idea. I'm all in favour of opening up the world to knowledge, communication and tubgirl (Internet folklore), and the next time I find myself lost in the Namib Desert, it'll be something of a relief to stumble into a village and order up some essentials (water, sunblock, bucket and spade) using the local witch doctor's portable. Assuming it's not infested with viruses, Trojans and porn diallers like notebooks on every other continent.

One thing bothers me, though. Since I doubt the people behind the idea are busy buying up old laptops from eBay, the machines will be new. Which begs the question, what sort of profit margin does this mean the likes of Comet and Dixons are squeezing from us wealthy Westerners? Even if you shop cleverly online, you'll not get anything more than the most basic machine for £399, so how on earth can they provide the proposed 500MHz AMD-based systems with four USB ports, wireless connectivity, hand-crank power and a dual-mode screen, for a mere fraction of that amount?

The answer is that the hardware will be made in massive quantities – a million or more per shipment – and they'll not be using Windows. If they were to use Microsoft software, it would triple the cost of each unit and make the world's richest man even wealthier. Thank heavens for Linux!

## XBOX 360 ENTERS THE FRAY

Will Microsoft's new bruiser pinch the PC's future?

**THE XBOX 360** is one seriously steroid-pumped bit of kit, kicking sand in the face of many modern games PCs while flexing its biceps and grinning at girls on the volleyball court. It's powerful, bang up-to-date and is encroaching on traditional PC roles too.

Actually, what impresses most is the enthusiasm that surrounds any console launch. Demand was so high that the nation's stocks were thought to have run out within a couple of days of the launch, while customers on eBay bid over £600 for the Deluxe versions – twice the retail cost. And all with a marketing campaign that you missed if you blinked.

## XBOX 360 SPECIFICATION

**Hardware:** Triple-core CPU running at 3.2GHz, ATI Xenos graphics, 512MB DDR3 RAM, removable hard disk, wireless controllers, DVD, pale complexion and acne

While the Xbox 360 is a more rounded incarnation of its previous self, with the ability to do PC-like tasks such as download game demos to a removable hard disk, you still have to use a bridge for wireless networking and you won't be able to use many of your existing Xbox games either.

And to be honest, where's the reason to buy one? *Perfect Dark Zero* is nothing special, and *Project Gotham Racing 3* isn't that different from its predecessor – and these were the titles that would weaken the knees of the most hardened PC gamer? Right.

If games are what make a console, don't jump ship just yet. [www.xbox.com/en-GB/](http://www.xbox.com/en-GB/)

IT talks the talk, but does it walk the walk?

## NEWS ROUND-UP

Memory prices are slumping, and if your PC is beginning to creak a little, then one of the cheapest and most effective mods you can perform is to give it a bit more memory. You won't turn it into a beast overnight, but upping your system's memory to 1GB or above is a good idea for most, and it might make your Christmas prezzy games play better too. [www.crucial.com/uk](http://www.crucial.com/uk)

Win Enterprises has unveiled its fanless Pentium-M powered system, which could be a pointer towards a quieter future PC. The fanless PL-06058 is no games rig, but maybe one day we'll all be able to enjoy some much needed peace and quiet. [www.win-ent.com](http://www.win-ent.com)

BT should be feeling nervous right now. Skype is rolling out its version 2.0 beta, which adds a number of tweaks, including video conferencing, one-click interfacing with Microsoft Outlook, conference-calling and direct contact with various blogs into the mix. You can't ditch your landline yet, unfortunately, but phone sex has never been so much fun. So I'm told. [www.skype.co.uk](http://www.skype.co.uk)

## FLASH HURRY

Apacer releases fastest 200x USB flash drive

Winner of Japan's Good Design Award and available in 512MB, 1GB, 2GB and 4GB sizes, the Apacer Handy Steno HT203 features dual-channel, interleaved technology to increase data rates up to 30MB-per-second. It's also available with its own docking station, meaning you don't have to rummage under your desk to make contact.

The 4GB stick comprises both mechanical and electrical



IT'S big, backwardly compatible and the fastest in the world.

components, and is available for around £245. Although that's a lot of data to be carrying around in something so small. The 1GB variant has all the speed benefits, but is under £80. [www.apacer.com](http://www.apacer.com)

WARNING: THIS MONTH'S HARD WORDS

BY STEVE HOGARTY

**BMS RESPONSE TIME:** The stage of that drinking advert where the red balloon floats out and the lady swerves to avoid it. **ANALOGUE:** A monologue of, relating to, or near the anus. Also known as 'talking out of your arse'. **FANLESS PL-06058:** The robot that nobody loved. **FORCE FEEDBACK:** When we look inside a reader's window late at night before smashing through, tying them down and asking them what they thought of the redesign. **HANDY STENO:** Nicholas 'Handy' Steno was a pioneer in anatomy and geology. Credited with the law of superposition and the principle of lateral continuity. **STYLE PADDLES:** Part of the initiation ceremony of magazines such as *GQ* and *Glamour*. **TONAL PRESETS:** One of the many features of the new Ab-Meister 7000, including 'auto-levelling vasectomy inducers'.



FIVE  
ALIVEDo five axes really  
make a difference?

Like the 900-degree steering on the Driving Force Pro, the unique selling point of the RGT Force Feedback Pro is its support for five independent analogue axes. Unlike a button, which can be either up or down, an axis is more like a lever. The game registers progress all the way along the lever's track of movement, from top to bottom or left to right, allowing you to apply degrees of force progressively rather than simply turning them on or off.

Why would you want five axes? The simplest answer is because five is better than three. Additional numbers mean you can assign a clutch or handbrake to them, both of which can prove useful depending on how seriously you take your racing. My own experience with the RGT and two pedal sets is that a clutch makes things needlessly complex, although a progressive handbrake is a real boon if you like rallying. As an example, the addition of a clutch had a detrimental effect on my lap times in *Live For Speed*.

In all honesty, a 900-degree steering angle will make more of a difference to more racers. It affords you far greater precision when driving around tight street circuits, in addition to feeling more like a real car.

RGT FORCE  
FEEDBACK PROPRICE £85 MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster PHONE N/A WEBSITE [europe.thrustmaster.com/eng/](http://europe.thrustmaster.com/eng/)

**OF ALL THE** stuff I've reviewed on these pages, only the Logitech Driving Force Pro (issue 158, 93 per cent) stands out as something special. Designed and marketed as a PlayStation product, nobody imagined the wheel would work flawlessly on a Windows PC, and I quickly lost count of the number of emails I had from people thanking me for bringing it to their attention. Alright, there were about five. But the fact that five people wrote in made it special, OK?

There's also the fact that the Logitech is the best gaming wheel you can buy, with nothing else worthy of your consideration. It's so manifestly superior to every other PC or PlayStation product on the market that you begin to wonder why rivals haven't yet bought one and copied the bloody thing.

Guillemot Corporation, the company behind the Thrustmaster brand, seems to have the right idea. The RGT Force Feedback Pro not only mimics the Driving

Force Pro in name and appearance, but is also the only wheel available with five independent axes. Three are for steering, throttle and brake, same as any other wheel, while the extra two are for the clutch and handbrake or cockpit views – a second pedal-set (£19.99) can be bought to accommodate them. The full five axes are supported by many modern PC racing titles, though why you'd want to progressively turn your head rather than simply look left or right is anyone's guess.

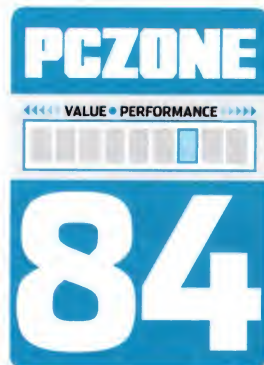
The wheel itself is mounted at a lower angle than Logitech's Driving Force Pro and is a pleasure to hold, with an eight-way hat switch plus seven buttons mounted around the hub. There are four 'tip' style paddles behind the wheel, the lower two of which are analogue and can be assigned to any spare axis.

The feedback engine is quieter and more refined than Logitech's, but the wheel varies from being tough like a sluice gate to spinning freely like a Fisher Price toy. No

matter how long I spent fiddling in the control panel, it never felt like a car.

In addition, while the floor-set features metal facings, it comes with a cable that's too short and pedals that are identically sprung – the throttle and brake are indistinguishable from one another. In contrast, the brake on the Driving Force Pro increases resistance as you push, which is more how a real brake pedal feels.

And there you have it. If the Logitech box wasn't on store shelves, I'd have no hesitation in recommending the new Thrustmaster. It's been well thought out and well made, with neat features for weekend drivers and hardcore racing fans alike. However, compare its pedals, feedback engine and price to its main competitor, and it's not quite so attractive.





# E176FP

PRICE £199

MANUFACTURE Dell

WEBSITE [www.dell.co.uk](http://www.dell.co.uk)

**CAN YOU REMEMBER** a time when Dell wasn't giving stuff away? In the company's latest mailshot, the Dimension 1100 is advertised at £249 plus VAT and ships with a 17-inch flat panel included in the price.

It's the same panel you see here. And while the E176FP is a capable product, you'll never get away from the fact that it's something thrown in for free as a means of buying people's loyalty. It doesn't feel cheap, despite the proud 'Made in China' stickers, and yes, it's fine for playing games, but at £200 you're left wanting more.

In short, you can buy a more fetching screen for less money. When other 17-inchers with DVI, added features and faster response times can be had for fifty quid less, shelling out for the giveaway Dell doesn't make much sense.



## SPECIFICATION

Screen size: 17-inch Resolution: 1280x1024  
Response: 12ms Bright/Cont: 300cd/sq.m/450:1  
Weight: 4.0Kg Connections: Analogue (D-Sub)  
Warranty: 12 months

# AL1917A

PRICE £201 MANUFACTURER Acer

WEBSITE [www.acer.co.uk](http://www.acer.co.uk)

**THE AL1917A FORMS** part of Acer's value line-up and is the only 19-inch monitor on parade. There are no more pixels in the screen, but the extra inches make action titles that much more enjoyable. You have to ask yourself, why spend the same money on something smaller?

It's not as though you're sacrificing image quality. Fire up your games and it's hard to separate from its 17-inch price rivals, and the 8ms response time makes it ideal for first-person shooters and DVD movies.

One other benefit of the Acer is that, like the NEC and ASUS, it has a pair of speakers integrated into the lower edge of the surround.



## SPECIFICATION

Screen size: 19-inch Resolution: 1280x1024  
Response: 8ms Bright/Cont: 250cd/sq.m/700:1  
Weight: 5.6Kg Connections: Analogue (D-Sub)  
Warranty: 36 months

Unlike the E176FP, whose warranty information is missing from all product literature and the Dell website, Acer is upfront about its three-year cover. A big-screen experience for small money.

PCZONE



77

PCZONE



89

# LCD72VM

PRICE £169 MANUFACTURER NEC

WEBSITE

[www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk](http://www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk)

**THE LCD72VM IS** the least expensive monitor on this page, yet it looks and feels like a product costing half as much again. While it can't produce the same handsome images as the larger, more expensive LCD1970GX (issue 157, 88 per cent), it does provide a picture quality that equals any of the panels here. Just don't expect a miracle.

Like the Acer and ASUS, the NEC has speakers that are fearsomely crap for *Quake 4*, but good for playing Flash movies and Web games. And although the speakers might be nothing to get excited about, like the ASUS, you do have a front-



## SPECIFICATION

Screen size: 17-inch Resolution: 1280x1024  
Response: 8ms Bright/Cont: 250cd/sq.m/450:1  
Weight: 4.7Kg Connections: Analogue (D-Sub)  
Warranty: 36 months

mounted headphone socket. NEC also provides its NaViSet software with the LCD72VM, allowing you to muck about with your settings from within Windows, though you'll never use it.

# MM17T

PRICE £199

MANUFACTURER ASUS

WEBSITE [uk.asus.com](http://uk.asus.com)

**THE MM17T IS** the best monitor here, not least because it comes with an enticing 12-month warranty covering you in the event you see just one dead pixel. Like the NEC, it has speakers that buzz when you turn them up, and like the Acer they're complimented with a headphone socket (the MM17D drops the speakers and the price by £10).

It's also the only screen to feature both analogue and digital inputs plus a button called Splendid. This is a means of cycling between tonal presets that adjust the colour and contrast of the image, depending on what you have on the screen at the time. To be honest, this is just the kind of feature I leave on its default setting.

All things considered, the MM17T is an ideal choice and ASUS is a name that gamers already trust.



## SPECIFICATION

Screen size: 17-inch Resolution: 1280x1024  
Response: 8ms Bright/Cont: 400cd/sq.m/600:1  
Weight: 4.9Kg Connections: Analogue (D-Sub), Digital (DVI) Warranty: 36 months

PCZONE



84

PCZONE



90





# DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



## Problems?

We've all got them you know... Up to your neck in debt? Partner sleeping around? A propensity to wake up on Saturday morning with a kebab and beer can stuck to your face? We can't help with any of those (but if you know the answers, let us know), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at [wandy@dearwandy.com](mailto:wandy@dearwandy.com), including as much information as necessary and system specs where applicable.

### EXCEL AT GRAPHICS

**Q** I'm looking to upgrade my graphics card. I currently have a GeForce FX 5500 and, well, it's crap. It hardly plays anything and so I'm looking for an AGP replacement to go with my Athlon64 3000+ and 1GB RAM. I have a budget of £200. What's the best video hardware I could get for the money?

Daniel Jackson

**A** The AGP interface restricts your choice somewhat, but that doesn't mean you can't get a corking card for your money. It's not that likely that you'll find a GeForce 6800 GT within your budget, but there are a good many Radeon alternatives that will leave you with change for a copy of Lionhead's *The Movies* and a small bag

### POOPER COOPER

**Q** I have a Packard Bell iMedia 8036 (2.84GHz P4, 1GB RAM, 120GB HDD, integrated Radeon 9100 128MB AGP), and was wondering what the best graphics card would be. I have a 'Cooper' motherboard, but don't know if I have PCI-Express or AGP as I'm not a PC techie. I'd like to get a 256MB card so I can play the latest games, including *Quake 4* and so on. I can play games such as *Call Of Duty 2* and *Battlefield 2* fine, but I've noticed that it's starting to chug with newer titles and demos.

Andre Vanstone

**A** As you already know, the ASUS motherboard inside your iMedia features an integrated Radeon 9100, which is slower than your average hour hand – I'm surprised you can play hungry stuff like *Battlefield 2* and not come away wanting an Xbox. What you don't know is that the Cooper has an AGP 8X interface, meaning you can slot in an AGP card. If, like Daniel Jackson of the previous letter fame, you have a budget of £200, your best bet would be a Radeon X800 XL of some description. If you're prepared to spend more, look for a GeForce 6800 GT, and if you're feeling reckless, go for the GeForce 6800 Ultra or Radeon X850 XT Platinum Edition. Sadly, none of the next-generation cards like the GeForce 7800 or Radeon X1800 are suitable for your board.

### WANDY JNR

**Q** In issue 162, Gordon wrote to say that he was experiencing random restarts. I had a similar problem when running *GTA: San Andreas* under Windows XP Home SP2. The machine would restart without warning, but only in certain areas of the game. In Control Panel, System, Advanced, Startup And Recovery, Settings, I had the Automatically Restart box checked. This meant that each time a fault occurred, the machine restarted by itself. I unchecked the box, and the next time it crashed I could see on the screen that the error was to do with the motherboard's nForce sound drivers, allowing me to chase down the problem. Just thought I'd write in with this answer – hope it helps.

Alan Bourke

**A** Good advice. Here's hoping that, if Gordon manages to stop his machine from restarting each time it encounters a problem, he may be able to get a good look at the resulting blue screen and see which driver is causing the error. I stick by the advice I gave him, which was that his PSU was a little too small for what he was asking of it, but what you've said makes equal sense.

### NEVER-ENDING PC

**Q** In the space of eight years I've purchased two PCs for the sole purpose of gaming. The purple-shirted staff of a well-known PC retailer recommended both to me. Imagine my disappointment when both PCs failed to live up to my expectations of running the latest games on high settings. Then to find out six months down the line that both computers were out of date. Please, help me make it third-time lucky by recommending a PC that will run the latest games on high settings for a long time to come. My budget is £1,200-£1,500.

Richard Moore

**A** I'm going to assume that you'll eBay your existing PC, and that you'll therefore require a new keyboard, mouse, monitor and speakers to go with the new one. To start with, I'd give some thought to a Dell, even though the company insists on selling its Dimension XPS range with Pentium chips. Even though I don't think you'd notice if it were AMD-powered, I still live in hope that the world's number one computer maker will start giving everyone a little more choice.

Go for the entry-level 3.20GHz XPS and add a GeForce 7800GTX. Don't bother with adding an X-Fi soundcard, nor should you add a monitor – Dell provides a limited range of its most expensive LCDs whenever you configure an XPS. The completed spec should come to about £1,200, leaving you with money over to spend on something lovely like a ViewSonic VP191b or NEC Mitsubishi LCD1970GX.

Alternatives to Dell include Evesham's Axis Decimator GT, which is an Athlon 64 X2-based system with a 7800 GT and ViewSonic screen, all for a whisker inside your budget; and Alienware's Aurora 5500

WANDY likes the Radeon X800 XL Ultimate. Shiny box too.



## DRIVER WATCH

Keep your PC happy

### GRAPHICS

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 5.11	11-NOV-05
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 81.87	26-OCT-05

### SOUND

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
Creative	SB X-FI 2.070003	22-AUG-05
Creative	AUDIGY 2 VALUE	21-SEP-05
	2.08.0002 BETA	

of popcorn. Go for Sapphire's X800 XL or its near-silent Radeon X800 XL Ultimate sibling, and don't hang about. Stock of the more popular AGP models is getting lower and lower, and the price higher and higher – they're already more expensive than the PCI-Express equivalent. Avoid the temptation to blow any extra dough on 512MB cards though, as you'll not notice the difference.

I should point out that the very best card for a mainstream budget is the GT-beating GeForce 6800 GS, but it's strictly a PCI-Express part and thus not much use on your AGP board.



@ wandy@dearwandy.com

✉ dearwandy, pc zone, future, 1 balcombe st, london, nw1

## Avoid the temptation to blow any extra dough on 512MB cards though – you won't notice the difference

Wise words for Daniel Jackson from Lord Wandy



A Dell XPS is a good, cheap gaming option.



configured with a 7800 GTX, 1GB RAM and Samsung SyncMaster 730BF. There's also the Mesh X-treme R500, which comes bundled with gaming peripherals such as Logitech's Formula Vibration wheel and Saitek X52 Joystick. As long as you pick a known brand with a 7800 GT/GTX or X1800 XL/XT, 1GB RAM and a decent warranty, you should have something that'll keep you going for at least the next 18 months.

### CELERY SALAD

**Q** I'm helping my sister upgrade her PC on a low budget. She has a Fujitsu-Siemens Scenic 661, which is a Pentium III 700MHz machine with a FSB of 100MHz and 256MB RAM. The motherboard is model D1107 with a i440BX/ZX chipset and Phoenix BIOS. I bought a slot converter and a Celeron

1.1GHz, but when I turn on the power to the case, the fans on both PCU and CPU come on and stay on, which is not normal for this PC. The monitor remains in standby and nothing else happens. I'm new to upgrading and need help. Any tips would be appreciated.

Wayne Hughes

**A** When I first read your message, I thought the answer would be straightforward – the Pentium III 700 and Celeron 1.1 used different voltages. But they don't. Having refreshed my memory, both the Pentium III and Celeron are second-generation Coppermine chips and there won't be voltage problem. There was an issue with PPGA and FC-PGA Celerons, but that's something for another letter.

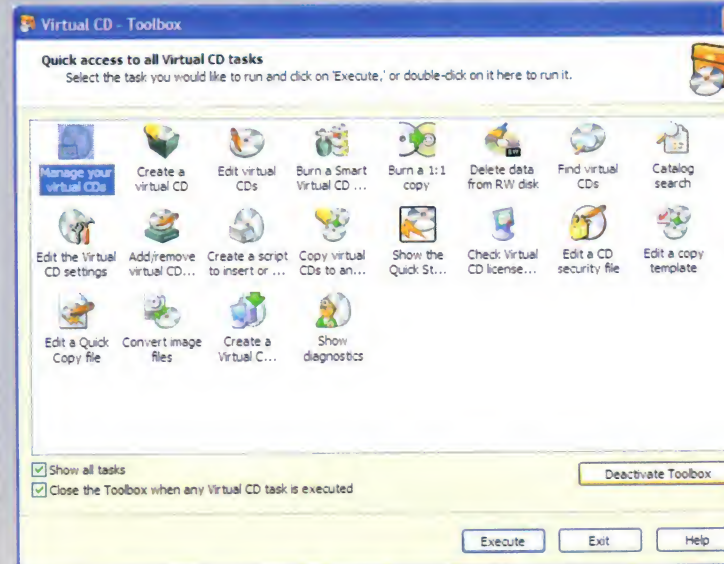
So, I don't know. Slot converters do work, and you've used the right Celeron for



**WARNING:  
DO TRY  
THIS AT HOME!**

A few days ago, my broadband line went dead. I called BT. "You need to reboot your PC," I was told. No, I replied, my PC has no connection with my DSL line and the router that did was in the other room. Would you like me to reboot that? "Your PC needs rebooting," he repeated, unable to step through his Customer-o-Matic until I complied. Not willing to close all my documents, I visited the Sounds and Audio control panel and double-clicked 'Windows Logoff' clip. "Great," he said, hearing the tune. A top tip for frustrated call queuers!

## 50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE



DOES the job.

### 6 VIRTUAL CD

**EXPECT TO PAY** £28

[www.virtualcd-online.com](http://www.virtualcd-online.com)

A friend of mine wrote to EA complaining that a *Battlefield 1942* disc had shattered in his son's CD-ROM drive, resulting in a loud bang and a bill from PC World. The company replaced the disc but refused to recompense him for the drive.

Last year, Electronic Arts sold games worth a total of \$3,129 million, netting the company \$500 million income – some ten per cent higher than previously. Like any company run by miserable accountants, it pleases its shareholders by trimming costs, and it seems that CDs could be the target of some of its cost-cutting.

It was a cracked *Battlefield* disc that prompted me to buy Virtual CD some while back.

VCD is a clever utility which replicates any CD or DVD as a directory on your hard disk, with Windows 'seeing' it as an inserted CD-ROM. This means you can play games which demand you leave the CD in the drive without the CD being in the drive.

The principal use of VCD is to back-up your crumbling EA discs and keep them in a cupboard instead. Benefits include levels loading much quicker than when spooled from a CD, and you never have to fumble around to change discs or wince at how your drive sounds like a washing machine on its spin cycle.

The software is 100 per cent legal and won't create copies of digitally protected media, but for the games that it does support, it's invaluable.

the job – 100MHz bus, derived from the Pentium it replaces, and cheap. I can only imagine that your motherboard needs a BIOS update, that the slot converter is damaged, or that the Celeron you've found

is dead. I would also say that I think you're flogging a dead horse with this one, in that the performance 'leap' between the Pentium III and the Celeron isn't going to be noticeable. **PCZ**





# The Dell

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XPS

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# WATCHDOG

Rotten companies need sorting – and good ones need praising...

## Here to help!

Companies pissing you off? Don't feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Email Suzy at [watchdog@pczone.co.uk](mailto:watchdog@pczone.co.uk) with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to her at the address above. Pleased remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

FULL of pink Laserpod goodness.



## FREE THE DVD

Christmas shopping: it's expensive, time-consuming and let's face it, more tedious than an episode of *Big Brother*. So when Anthony Smith was looking at buying a Laserpod on Ebuyer's site and discovered that you could get a free DVD player with the order, he jumped at the offer. What better way to chalk up a couple of Christmas presents for the wife? But when the parcel arrived, only the Laserpod was in the package.

Contacting customer services, he was informed that even though the order had appeared as "1 x Laserpod – WOW! – Buy a Laserpod and get a FREE DVD Player worth £19.70!", because he hadn't specifically clicked on the bundle offer, Ebuyer wouldn't send out the DVD player. In fact, it said that if he still wanted it, he should return his Laserpod, wait to be credited for that and make a new order, making sure he'd clicked on the offer.

*Agreeing with Anthony that it did seem kind of pointless to send something back just so that it could be sent out again with a new addition, we got in touch with Ebuyer. Lo and behold, the next morning, we were contacted by Anthony, who told us: "Ebuyer is sending out the free DVD player – and I take it that's down to you."*

**Ebuyer is sending out the free DVD player – I take it that's down to you. My faith in humanity is restored...**

*My faith in human nature is restored." And your wife's faith in you we hope.*

## BELATED CARD

Way back in August, Kieron Bryan's PNY GeForce 6600GT card "broke and appeared to be overheating for the hell of it". After testing it with another system and graphics card, he decided that it was faulty and in need of replacing. Having bought the card from PC World's Component Centre a while back, he returned to the website, only to find that it had been moved.

Eventually tracking down a customer service number, he explained his problem, only to be told that he'd have to email the Component Centre, as it's not actually a part of the PC World outlet (despite the



GRAPHICS cards ain't much use unless they're working.

massive logo stating otherwise). Without being able to find the original order number, he fired off an email with the rest of the details he could muster instead.

Two weeks passed and without having received a reply, he called customer services again. It told him he was unlucky – as the Component Centre didn't have a number, he'd have to sit tight and wait for a response. Nearly a month after the original email was sent, a reply was at last received, but it wasn't quite what he wanted to hear: the company couldn't find the order.

Kieron replied by supplying bank details, waited more than a month again, before a final annoyed email threatening legal action at last got him an RMA number to return the card. He packaged it up and sent it back, but he's been waiting for the refund for a month and still isn't even sure if the card's been received at the other end.

*After reading that Kieron's been waiting for three months to get this issue resolved, we got straight in contact with PC World. It responded by saying: "We have contacted Mr Kieron Bryan and arranged a refund to be forwarded to him for the faulty graphics card without delay. We apologise for the disappointing level of service Mr Bryan received following the graphics card becoming faulty."*

*"The PC World Component Centre website has now been incorporated into the main PC World website, and the customer service level provided for our previous Component Centre customers should be consistent with PC World standards, in spite of this transition. Unfortunately, there were errors made when Mr Bryan contacted us and we apologise for those and for the delay in resolving the problem." Well done PC World – eventually. **PCW***

**THE ACCUSED**

**ebuyer**

**PC WORLD**  
The Computer Superstore

Welcome to the PC Component Centre

**Guilty until proven innocent**



**SAINTS NOT SINNERS**

**BenQ**

We all need a treat from time to time, and Steve Bond's no different. Splurging on a super-responsive BenQ 17-inch LCD monitor, he pored lovingly over its smooth lines when it arrived. But then he discovered that "the stand pivot wouldn't budge, so the screen always tilted downwards". Upon investigation, he discovered that one of the washers in the pivot mechanism was out of place. Quickly getting on the phone to

BenQ, he asked for just the stand to be replaced rather than having to send the whole beauty of a monitor back, but was informed that the whole unit would have to be replaced instead. However, before his heart sank, BenQ's customer support explained that a simultaneous drop-off and pick-up would be arranged to any address that he specified. So when he submitted his request and swapped his faulty monitor for a lovely new one at his own convenience, Steve felt compelled to express his pleasure at the "damn fine customer service", and even went so far as to proclaim: "BenQ is the business!" And we're inclined to agree.



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**REMEMBER:**  
YOU ALSO NEED  
MONEY FOR FOOD  
AND CLOTHING

We are legally required to remind readers that money splashed on hardware may be better spent on families, wives and girlfriends. PC ZONE isn't liable for any estrangement that may ensue.

# HARDWARE DIVIDE

Did Santa not bring you what you wanted? Time to buy it yourself then...

## LOADED?

### GRAPHICS

#### GV-NX78X256V-B

EXPECT TO PAY £350

MANUFACTURER GIGABYTE

WEBSITE [uk.giga-byte.com](http://uk.giga-byte.com)

Emphatically the fastest card we've tested. Unlike our favourite 6600 GT, GIGABYTE's 7800 GTX is built to reference specifications with a 430MHz processor and 256MB of 1.2GHz DDR3. Hunt around and you can buy an even faster variant or just overclock the crap out of this one. It seems to enjoy it.



### PROCESSOR



#### ATHLON 64 FX-57

EXPECT TO PAY

£700

MANUFACTURER AMD

WEBSITE [www.amd.co.uk](http://www.amd.co.uk)

For extreme performance, the flagship Athlon is the only processor to buy – even if it makes the same dent in your bank account as last month's mortgage payment. With AMD's new memory controller, unlocked multiplier and highest ever clock speed, the latest FX is the fastest thing inside any PC.

### MOTHERBOARD



#### FATALITY AN8 SLI

EXPECT TO PAY

£130

MANUFACTURER ABIT

WEBSITE [www.abit.com.tw](http://www.abit.com.tw)

Designed specifically for gaming, the nForce4 SLI-based Fatal1ty AN8 supports all 939-pin AMD processors. As well as SLI support it features ABIT's Guru Panel, a front-mounted display unit for overclockers. The board also uses a bevy of ABIT features, including OTES cooling and AudioMAX 7.1 onboard audio.



#### RAPTOR 74GB

EXPECT TO PAY

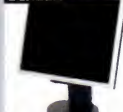
£118

MANUFACTURER Western Digital

WEBSITE [www.westerndigital.com](http://www.westerndigital.com)

Travelling at 10,000rpm and with a 4.5ms seek time, the Raptor is billed as the world's fastest SATA drive. And although it's not especially large, it's big enough for a dedicated gaming rig. Two of them in RAID 0 configuration will give you almost 150GB and really make Battlefield 2 fly.

### SCREEN



#### MULTISYNC LCD1970GX

EXPECT TO PAY

£360

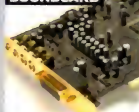
MANUFACTURER NEC Mitsubishi

WEBSITE

[www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk](http://www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk)

The LCD1970GX is a 19in LCD screen, with an 8ms response time and an inky black glass screen that saturates all the colours and darkens the shadows. It includes a joystick controller for the on-screen display, and a four-port USB hub.

### SOUND CARD



#### SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS

EXPECT TO PAY

£179

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE [uk.europe.creative.com](http://uk.europe.creative.com)

Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles with deep pockets. Supports EAX 5.0, with 64MB X-RAM for top quality sound effects. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal. Sounds nicer than an Audigy, but still painfully pricey.

### SPEAKERS



#### Z-5500

EXPECT TO PAY

£220

MANUFACTURER Logitech

WEBSITE [www.logitech.co.uk](http://www.logitech.co.uk)

They'll cost you over £200, but they're also the best speakers we've ever tested at PC ZONE. They make both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself blowing the dust from your old CDs and DVDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

## SKINT?

### GRAPHICS

#### X800 GTO

EXPECT TO PAY £115

MANUFACTURER GECUBE

WEBSITE [gecube.com.tw](http://gecube.com.tw)

You could save yourself a tenner and go for the 8-pipeline GT, but you'd be missing out. The GTO is without doubt the mainstream card to go for: an overclocking dream, it can trump the 6800 GT on maximum detail and this GECUBE comes with a heat-pipe and sensible bundle.



### PROCESSOR



#### ATHLON 64 3000+

EXPECT TO PAY

£95

MANUFACTURER AMD

WEBSITE [www.amd.co.uk](http://www.amd.co.uk)

If you don't mind getting your hands dirty in the BIOS, Athlon 64s can be highly rewarding – particularly so on an nForce4 motherboard. Famous for overclocking and top performance in games, there's really no alternative. This AMD chip is the one to have if you're building to a budget.

### MOTHERBOARD



#### A8N-E NFORCE4 ULTRA

EXPECT TO PAY £80

MANUFACTURER ASUS

WEBSITE [uk.asus.com](http://uk.asus.com)

The A8N-E supports the full range of Athlon 64 FX, dual-core Athlon 64 X2 and Athlon 64 chips, plus PCI Express and 7.1 channel audio. The nForce4 Ultra chipset has more features than a circus has clowns, and ASUS includes a raft of its own, as well as some serious overclocking tools.



#### 1200JD SATA

EXPECT TO PAY

£55

MANUFACTURER Western Digital

WEBSITE [www.westerndigital.com](http://www.westerndigital.com)

It's not like a 120GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it's more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, a couple of hundred music files and the odd porn flick will still leave plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

### SCREEN



#### VE710S

EXPECT TO PAY

£152

MANUFACTURER ViewSonic

WEBSITE [www.viewsonic.co.uk](http://www.viewsonic.co.uk)

Not a lot of dosh buys you an awful lot of screen. The VE710S is a budget-priced 17in flat panel featuring an 8ms response time and 1,280x1,024 resolution and producing bright, crisp images worthy of the ViewSonic name. The company's UltraBrite technology gives rich and vivid colours in games.

### SOUND CARD



#### SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

EXPECT TO PAY

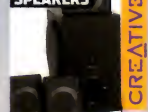
£34

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE [uk.europe.creative.com](http://uk.europe.creative.com)

If you're a casual gamer, there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard because you'll not be able to tell the difference. The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support, and makes an awful lot of sense.

### SPEAKERS



#### INSPIRE P5800

EXPECT TO PAY

£40

MANUFACTURER Creative

WEBSITE [uk.europe.creative.com](http://uk.europe.creative.com)

You can go cheaper, but to meet the quality of the P5800 you'll need spend a lot more, as there's no better set in this price range. The subwoofer is deep and creamy, the satellites crisp and clean. A wired remote, line-in and headphone jack complete a very decent little package.



# Gaming PCs with Bite!



"A Killer System" 89% PC Gamer Dec 05

## Pyro 64 - SLI

"Guaranteed to fly" 88% PC Gamer Aug 05

"Fastest thing we've tested" 86% PC Zone Jul 05



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# PCZONE





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\*Final Fantasy XI Online Beta Version for Xbox 360 is playable until closed by Square-Enix, and requires an Xbox Live Gold account, Xbox 360 Hard Drive and a broadband connection.





PCZONE

# FREEPLAY



Skint? Play PC games for zero notes...

DISC EDITOR Suzy Wallace

## WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

**FREE  
GAMES!**

### Chocoholic

**S** O IT'S 2006. The chaos of Christmas has passed and the hangover from New Years is only just starting to wear off. Oh yeah, and this is the year that will apparently spell doom for the PC thanks to the next-gen consoles. But that's nothing. The ZONE office has a new scourge. Its name? Chocomilk.

We discovered its soothing yet addictive properties the day we moved into our new office. Despite sounding like a chocolate milkshake, it surprised us by being a hot drink, and it must contain more E numbers than a swimming pool of Sunny Delight. The proof? 50 per cent of the ZONE team are now addicted to it.

But then disaster struck! The vending machine ran out. Prezzer, Steve, Jamie, myself and Art Editor Rich, all fully-fledged addicts by this point, faced the consequences of life without chocomilk. It's now been four days and life is tough. So please treasure this issue - we've been through hell to get it to you. Oh, and if you have any cash left after Christmas, please give generously to Chocomilk-aholics Anonymous at the normal ZONE address.

### Try this!

Spy some crop circles in *Battlefield 2*!



Start up the Zatar Wetlands map, jump in some form of aircraft and head to the north-eastern neutral flag. There's a small farm there, and in the field next to it is a set of crop circles. Make sure you're looking down or you'll miss them!



96

### Demo Pages

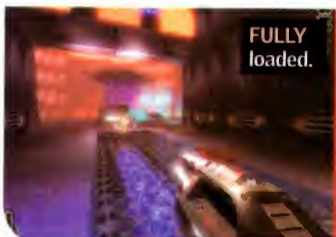
Your first port of call for free games!



98

### Buzz

News and culture from a world of free PC gaming



102

### Freeware

The best darn free games on t'Internet



104

### Play!

Essential reviews of the latest mods, maps and add-ons



110

### Make the most of The Movies

Your chance to play god!



113

### How To Make A Game

Play the *Gibbage* demo!



PCZONE  
FREE-O-METER



0  
HOURS

\*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month



203.8  
HOURS\*



FREEPLAYDEMOS

# Demos

On the DVD – free games galore!



## DISC TROUBLES?

Having problems getting something on our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover-disc support. Alternatively, email [support@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:support@futurenet.co.uk), including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.



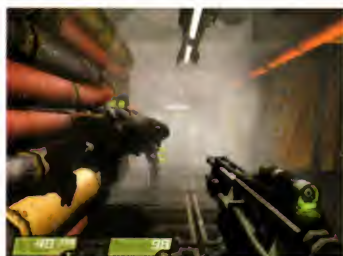
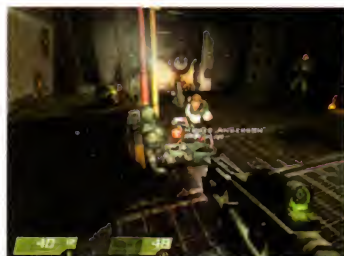
**21**  
PLAYABLE  
DEMOS  
ON THE DVD!



## QUAKE 4

Shoot the Strogg in single- and multiplayer – it's a blast!

[www.quake4game.com](http://www.quake4game.com) | ETA: Out now

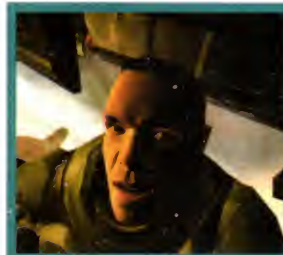


**FOLLOWING STRAIGHT ON** from the storyline in *Quake II*, this action-packed demo plunges you straight back into the chaotic war between humankind and the Strogg.

Starting off aboard an orbiting mothership, you're first introduced to your charming comrades, before being strapped into the nearest landing craft and shipped off to the nearby Strogg planet. The landing

experience isn't exactly what you'd hoped for though, and you soon find yourself dumped in the middle of a raging war with burly uniformed men shouting orders and Strogg trying their best to remove your head from your shoulders. You'll have to fetch medics, catch up with your teammates, clear out trenches and take any opportunity possible to practice your aiming skills with your cache of weaponry.

Also up for grabs is the utterly delectable multiplayer mode, allowing you to blast seven tons of shit out of opponents in The Fragging Yard level. What are you waiting for? There's Strogg that need splattering!



### GOOD SAMARITAN

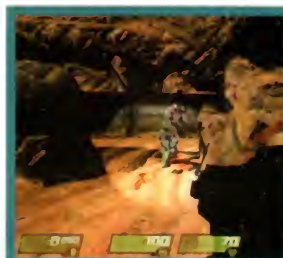
Your ship's crashed and you're in a bad way, passing in and out of consciousness amid chaos. Oh look, there's a friendly passer-by! He's even going to stop to give you a helping hand. Yes, the medpack's out... Oh no, he's been shot. Never mind.



### TOO LATE

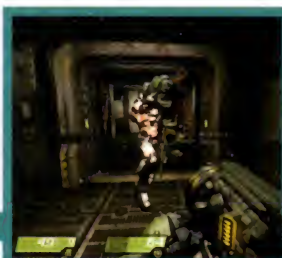
Damn de damn, those corridors I come. Let's just get this door open. Open sesame! Oh dear, what's this? Some poor guy's getting dragged off by a hunk of Strogg flesh and you're not in time to save him. I'm sure he'll be fine.

**MARINE MUTILATION** Being a marine's a tough life. If you need proof, just check out this lot...



### BAD LUCK

Scouting through the trenches, you come up against a horde of the Strogg bastards. Look, one of them's next to your gun-fetters buddy! Oh crap, you shot a medic and now your companions gonna get it. Quick!



### DON'T GET SPIKEY

Right, you're on your way back to bring the medic up to the front lines. Awww, this guy's even gone out of his way to show you where to go. Oh wait, a huge Strogg's just appeared and soaked him through the torso. Thanks anyway, mate.



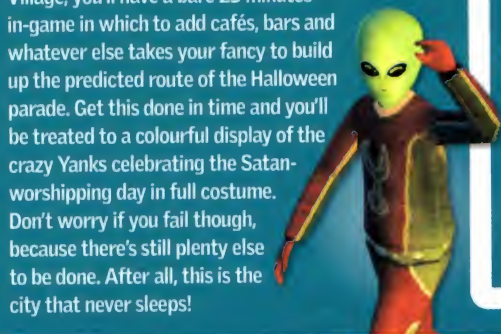


## TYCOON CITY: NEW YORK

Take charge of life in the Big Apple **EXCLUSIVE!**

[www.atari.com/tycooncity](http://www.atari.com/tycooncity) | ETA: Feb 06

**NEW YORK: YOU'VE** heard the songs and seen the sitcoms, but now you're in charge of the entire city. Starting off in the modest area of Greenwich Village, you'll have a bare 25 minutes in-game in which to add cafés, bars and whatever else takes your fancy to build up the predicted route of the Halloween parade. Get this done in time and you'll be treated to a colourful display of the crazy Yanks celebrating the Satan-worshipping day in full costume. Don't worry if you fail though, because there's still plenty else to be done. After all, this is the city that never sleeps!



### Things To Do In New York

Had enough of Halloween? Try these other quests...



#### STUDENT DOSSERS

Not happy with just their education, this irritating pair explain a thing or two about increasing student happiness in the area. Take as much of their student loan as possible.



#### PARTY IN THE PARK

You couldn't really call this a park right now, could you? But some pretty fountains and entertaining staff is all it needs to transform into an area that improves the local beauty of the surroundings.

## NFS: MOST WANTED

Get friendly with the boys in blue

[www.eagames.com](http://www.eagames.com) | ETA: Out now

**START YOUR ENGINES** for this demo of the latest *NFS* incarnation. With the main emphasis now being on creating enough bedlam to get noticed while evading the clutches of the law, there's plenty of merry hell to be had as you cruise around the busy city. Three quick races are on offer,

from sprints to speed traps, but the most fun to be had is in trying your hand at completing one of the challenges: evading a police pursuit, racing through toll booths or smashing your way through six roadblocks before escaping.

### EVADING THE LAW

The lowdown for *Most Wanted*



- 1 En masse, the police are liable to form rolling roadblocks that are tricky to escape. On their own, they don't pose much of a problem though.
- 2 This meter shows whether you're about to escape the police's clutches or get busted, depending on how close the police are. Don't get trapped!
- 3 This handy map shows the location of all nearby locations of interest, including pursuit breakers that can relieve you of your police burden.
- 4 The total bounty from the current pursuit is shown here. Smash into cars, drive the car off-road or like you've just stolen it, to up the total.

### Off-roading

Keep your eye out for extra routes. You never know where they might lead!



#### Golf course

Dive through the archway of the entrance to annoy the club members by getting your ride to tear up their immaculate greens. Watch out for the bunkers!



#### Stadium

Just off the motorway, with pursuit breakers on the entrance and exit, this is a great place to shed some of that excess police baggage. Rev it up and burn them off!

## THE BEST OF THE REST



### RAG DOLL KUNG FU

It's bizarre, addictive, funny and cheap – but if you still need convincing that *Rag Doll Kung Fu* is worth the dosh, here's a demo of the limb-manipulating beat 'em up. You need the Internet and a Steam account before you start. [www.ragdolkungfu.com](http://www.ragdolkungfu.com)



### X3: REUNION

Space, as well as being the final frontier, it's also bloody beautiful – as this rolling demo of *X3* shows. Using the game engine to great effect, you can just gawp in amazement or use the nifty benchmark system to see how your PC will cope. Full demo soon. [www.egosoft.com](http://www.egosoft.com)



### HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

Time for more spotty wizardry as you take control of either Harry or his chums. Chaos is erupting around you, but you must make it safely back to the Portkey. Remember to combine your magic for the best effect. [harrypotter.ea.com/](http://harrypotter.ea.com/)



### GIBBAGE

If you've been following Dan Marshall's 'How To Make A Game' (see p113), then you'll be happy to get your mitts on this exclusive demo of his fresh offering, *Gibbage*. It's 100 per cent homegrown fun as you rampage your way around the two levels on offer in this super-violent platform shooter. [www.gibbage.co.uk](http://www.gibbage.co.uk)

**PCZONE**  
**HOT**  
**DOWNLOADS**

### HAMMER & SICKLE DEMO

[www.fileshack.com/file.x?fid=8075](http://www.fileshack.com/file.x?fid=8075)



Assume the role of a Soviet spy as you try out Nival Interactive's 3D role-playing strategy title set in the spring of 1949. The demo takes place in the Silent Storm universe and features extensive cut-scenes and one mission from the main campaign too.

### COMBINE DESTINY

[cd.bounced.de/index2.php](http://cd.bounced.de/index2.php)



You've partaken in the rebel side of the *Half-Life 2* story for long enough. But when a thought for those poor old Combine soldiers? Indeed, this marks you join their ranks and slaughter Freeman's chums as you battle your way through an old rebel town.



## SNIPPETS



### RICHER SOUNDS

If the engine noises in *Richard Burns Rally* weren't quite your cup of tea, then head to this site and grab hdi's realistic sound mod and engine sound pack. Once installed, you get access to 44 new and updated engine sounds, as well as some fantastic rally monster effects, from blow-off valves to new turbo noises. [www.bhbmotorsports.com/developer/1923](http://www.bhbmotorsports.com/developer/1923)



### THE FINAL FRONTIER

By now, *EVE Online* space cadets should be happily building up their fleet in the new *Red Moon Rising* expansion. As the last of the Exodus chapters, the precursor of the Kali expansion and available absolutely free, this expansion will feature Titans, the largest battleships ever and carriers to enable the creation of massive fleets, among other additions. [www.eve-online.com](http://www.eve-online.com)

# APOCALYPSE SOON

It's the end of all references to REM, and we feel fine

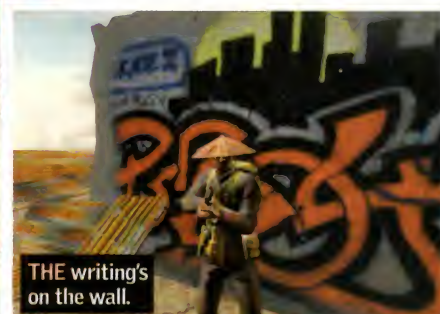
[www.bfapocalypse.com](http://www.bfapocalypse.com)

**THE END OF** the world, the ruination of modern civilisation, the juxtaposition of futuristic machinery and a daily struggle for survival in a desolate nuclear-fallout scarred wasteland – ooh

it makes us all tingly just thinking about it. *Mad Max*, *Fallout* and even that crappy movie with the dragons, they all have something in common – people in ragged clothes using cigarettes and

chocolate as currency, and killing one another with huge guns and fast cars.

Now, here to join their ranks is *Battlefield: Apocalypse*, a total-conversion for our favourite militaristic online shooter, which injects the game with so much *Mad Max*-inspired goodness that superchargers and radioactive Mel Gibsons begin to seep from every orifice. Packed with so much amazing content, *Apocalypse* looks set to be the best *Battlefield 2* mod since the last best one.



# WIN! A New PC and King Kong

**Packard Bell.**  
Your digital playground

A Packard Bell iMedia PC plus copies of *King Kong* up for grabs in our monster Kong compo!

**WHAT ABOUT THAT** Peter Jackson's *King Kong* movie eh? When that little fella with the furry feet took a magic ring to the Empire State building in New York, followed by an elf, a dwarf, a ranger, a huge killer ape and a T-Rex called Gandalf. Marvellous stuff. But hey, we loved the tie-in game too, giving *King Kong* a *PC ZONE* Recommended award, no less, and 83 per cent.

Now the nice non-simian folks at Packard Bell and Ubisoft have teamed up to offer you the chance to win an iMedia 1518 desktop PC, plus the fantastic *King Kong* game. There'll also be five copies of the game up for grabs as runners-up prizes. The iMedia desktop PC is a

"perfect home entertainment system", or so it says on this bit of paper. And as well as giving you the ability to play games and access the Internet, the built-in TV tuner card and PowerCinema software allows you to seamlessly access films, music and pornogr... photography. As long as you have a monitor to plug it into. Ahem.

So, do you want to win? Of course you do – stop monkeying around (sigh) and just answer the following question:

**What is the name of the actor who played the big monkey fella in Peter Jackson's hit remake of *King Kong*?**

Send your entries on a postcard or the back of an envelope to King Kongpetition, *PC ZONE*, Future, 1 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NA.

Make sure you get your entries to us by February 2, 2006. Any received after this date will be given to chimpanzees to be eaten and shat on.



T-REX had never laughed so much!

### PACKARD BELL IMEDIA 1518 DESKTOP PC BUNDLE

- Pentium 4 516 processor
- 512MB RAM
- 160GB Hard Drive
- DVD-RW burner
- NVIDIA FX5200 graphics card
- TV Tuner card & PowerCinema software
- Mouse, keyboard, speakers



# MOVING MOVIES

**PC ZONE** talks to Katherine Kang, CEO at Fountainhead Entertainment and creator of the machinima *Anna*

[www.fountainheadent.com](http://www.fountainheadent.com)

**PCZ:** Can you describe your role at Fountainhead Entertainment and explain what the company does?

**KK:** Fountainhead is a multimedia entertainment company that focuses primarily on machinima and game development. Besides wearing the hat of CEO, I'm producer, director and writer for most of Fountainhead's work. Our most recent game project was a mobile phone game titled *Doom RPG* that we did for id Software. Our most recent published machinima piece is titled *Anna*, shown at the Sundance Film Festival, and our most seen machinima piece is probably *In The Waiting Line*, a machinima music video that had a fairly long circulation on MTV and MTV2.

**PCZ:** What was your background before setting up the company?

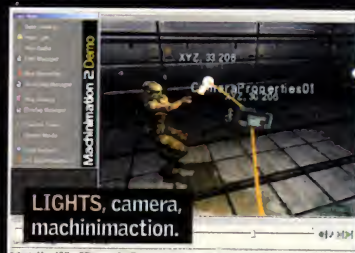
**KK:** Prior to Fountainhead, I worked as director of business development at id Software. Most of my film and television experience came from helping friends work on their projects at the UCLA and USC film schools. While working at id, the blending of games with film and television just seemed like a no-brainer. That's how Fountainhead was born.

**PCZ:** Of the machinima around at the moment, are there any that you like? And if so, which ones?

**KK:** I always enjoy Red vs Blue and the work that the ILL clan produce.

**PCZ:** What do you think of Lionhead's recent release, *The Movies*? And do you think that this will help to increase the popularity of machinima?

**KK:** I haven't played *The Movies* yet, but I think it's a great idea. I'm glad a



LIGHTS, camera, machinimaction.



company like Lionhead took the initiative to do something like this; it's historically been very creative in the ways it makes its products. I'm hopeful that this will help increase the interest and popularity of machinima.

**PCZ:** Your beautiful machinima piece *Anna* was shown at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival. What sort of reception did it receive?

**KK:** People were surprised that *Anna* was created in the Quake 3 Engine. Many people perceived it as 'just' stylised

BIRD strikes gold!



animation, so what we were hoping to do with that piece was accomplished.

**PCZ:** With so much machinima revolving around either violence or humour, what made you decide to take a different approach with *Anna*?

**KK:** We really wanted people to see *Anna* and not think games. We wanted to show how machinima could be dramatic, beautiful and soulful. In many ways, it was our way of saying: "This is a new art form. Use it to tell your story."

**PCZ:** Can you give a brief explanation of your product, Machinimation 2.0?

**KK:** Machinimation 2.0 is a program that allows you to create machinima in the Doom 3 Engine. It has all the features of M1, plus the added bonus of the Doom 3 Engine and additional features that we'd been looking forward to using ourselves.

**PCZ:** What do you see in the future for machinima?

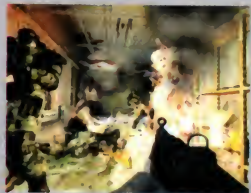
**KK:** The future of machinima is pretty bright. With the game and film/television industries paying more attention to it, and with more machinima producers cropping up each year, we may soon see an animated machinima series on prime time TV. We already have video mods on MTV, now it just needs to make that jump from MTV to BBC!

## SNIPPETS



TESTING, TESTING

If you've got any spare time left for another MMOG, then Codemasters' *RF Online* offers a blend of sci-fi and fantasy that's gone down a storm with the Koreans. Beta-testing will begin in January, so if you fancy giving it a whirl, log onto the site and sign up for a life of giant battle mechs and spiritual civilisations. [www.rf-onlinegame.com](http://www.rf-onlinegame.com)



CONTROL YOUR FEAR

We don't often get excited about mod toolkits, but we're hoping that F.E.A.R.'s SDK will signal the start of some spectacular mods. Its engine has the potential for some action-packed combat and we can't wait to see what the community comes up with. [www.whatisfear.com/uk/](http://www.whatisfear.com/uk/)

## Bug-Fix of the Month

**THIS MONTH: VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE - BLOODLINES**



The unofficial v1.9 patch "removes a critical bum cut-scene".

## Movie of the Month PREY

Originally announced way back in 1996, 3D Realms' shooter looks set to prove that the Doom 3 Engine is more than just a tech demo with its combination of monsters, spiritual dimensions and gravity-defying combat...



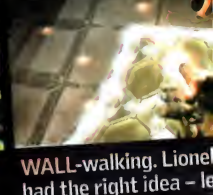
PESKY kids. Despite lobbing fireballs, they'll still ask you to buy them booze and fags.



PORTALS. The space-time continuum's really screwed up now. I blame Dr Who.



GOING organic. Even the weapons have a bio-mech feel. Check out this guy.



WALL-walking. Lionel had the right idea - le dancing on the ceiling



# MAN THE FORTRESS

Quake 4 gets a *Team Fortress* makeover [www.q4f.net](http://www.q4f.net)

**IT SEEMS THAT** nearly every first-person shooter ever made has seen the minigun-inspired chaos of *Team Fortress* join its ranks, but now the infamous mod is finally returning to its original home – *Quake*.

The talented chaps behind this mod are determined to bring every weapon, map and character class to *Quake 4*'s technically-savvy engine, naturally making everything much prettier along the way.

The original *Team Fortress* was a *QuakeWorld* mod pitting two teams and ten character classes against each other in a hectic game of capture the flag. The mod later winged its way to the *Half-Life* engine as *Team Fortress Classic*, but veteran gamers remember that the true home of the mod is in id software's own murky shooter.

With the game's SDK recently released, the *Quake 4 Fortress* team's currently feverishly working to get the mod in our eager hands. In the meantime, reclaim the Heavy Weapons Guy in the original *QuakeWorld* version, before this next-gen beauty lands in a few short months.



# HL2 Mod Has Us Gripped

[www.irongrip.net](http://www.irongrip.net)

*Iron Grip* adds a strategy twang to Gordon Freeman's adventure

**THIS IS ONE** the most novel *Half-Life 2* mods we've ever stumbled across: *Iron Grip* is a part-strategy, part-shooter game, set in the middle of a raging fantasy war. Intrigued? So are we.

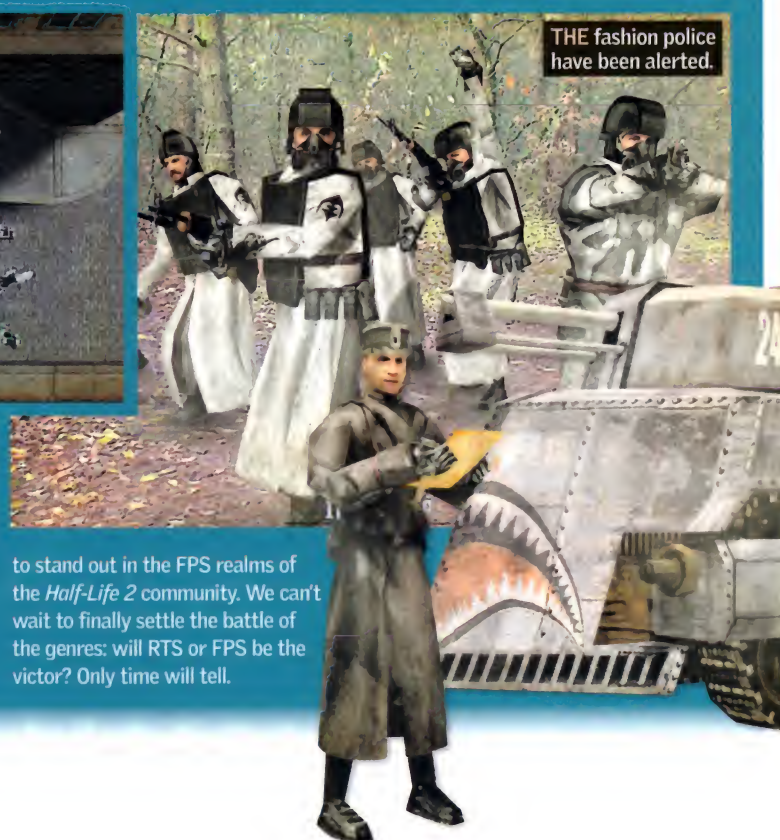
The mod puts one player in control of the Rahmos team, creating enemies and vehicles in a top-down RTS mode; while the second Resistance team is full of player-controlled characters battling against the RTS commander in a first-person view.

Another interesting feature in the mod are the unique playable characters, and choosing your combatant is no longer a matter of bland skin variety. Resistance team players will have unique weapons and abilities depending on their choice of character – and you can only choose them once, which should help carve the



game into even more of a unique online experience.

With a plethora of artwork and renders complementing an in-depth backstory for all the locations and characters that appear in the mod, the team behind *Iron Grip* have certainly struck us as a committed bunch, and the mod concept's sure



to stand out in the FPS realms of the *Half-Life 2* community. We can't wait to finally settle the battle of the genres: will RTS or FPS be the victor? Only time will tell.



# BOY IN BLUE

**MegaMan: Arena** revives the robot boy

[www.thinksurvival.com/mma](http://www.thinksurvival.com/mma)

ONCE UPON A time, the folks working on this game sat down at a large table and had one of the most illuminating concept meetings in gaming history: *MegaMan* + Quake 3 Engine = fun! And off they toddled to work away on the delectable full game you see before you.

*MegaMan: Arena*, shock horror, puts you in the ridiculously-oversized boots of the old-school platform hero. Somehow, we can't deny the immense appeal of dashing and wall-hopping around a deathmatch arena, while perhaps humming a tune long forgotten since the days of NES and Crystal Pepsi.

Along with the promise of multiple game modes and driveable mechs, *MegaMan: Arena* features all of your childhood favourites as playable characters, including Zero, Vile and erm... MegaMan. This is certainly one to watch out for, especially if you work for Capcom's legal department.



## SO, YOU WANT TO BE A... Games Tester



NAME *Kieran Skerri*  
WORKING ON A  
secret *Lionhead*  
Studios project  
AGE 25  
EXPERIENCE *Fable*,  
*Black & White 2* and  
*The Movies*

**PCZ** How did you get started?

**KS** I noticed that Lionhead was recruiting and I applied for a job on the test team. Several months down the line I heard back, got an interview and got the job.

**PCZ** What's the pay like?

**KS** As with any job, the amount of money you earn is largely down to the amount of dedication and energy you throw into your projects. I earn enough to live, eat, drink and run my car.

**PCZ** What does your job involve?

**KS** I have to manage the team I work with and hammer the games we're assigned. I need to be hard-working, loyal, observant and articulate, and able to apply a highly analytical mind to every task. Being able to express yourself is essential.

**PCZ** How rewarding is your job?

**KS** Aside from getting paid to work on games no-one else has ever seen, the main reward for working in this industry is the sense of pride you feel when you see your work shaping projects.

**PCZ** What's the most annoying part of the job?

**KS** You have to be prepared to make sacrifices: late nights, long hours and heavy workload often destroy any ideas you have of going down to the pub.

## WE SAY... DIY

Make sure you're fully computer-literate: you'll often need to install bits of software and hardware to get things running. Also, don't expect things to be a breeze - work can be arduous and repetitive!

NEXT MONTH  
SYWTBA... Games programmer

THAT'S some serious damp, man.

100

CHESS proved very popular.

## Dire Consequences

*Half-Life 2* gets zombified

[dire.bhivedesign.com](http://dire.bhivedesign.com)

*HALF-LIFE 2'S* potential for scary, shouting ghosts and hilarious zombie-death physics cannot be denied, and thus the fine minds behind *Dire* have packed the mod chock-full of the greedy flesh-eating scamps. But they're not zombies; how remiss of you. No, no, no, they're actually genetically-modified humans. Completely different then.

The *Dire* team promise a random horror game with unscripted scenes so scary, you'll be left with trouser stains removed only by the most plush of washing machines. We can't wait to dive in and start taking out some dirty zombies. Sorry, genetically-modified humans.



IT'S in the eyes.

## GIVE ME A BRAKE

Get ready for wheel change

[www.lugnuts racing.com/pedals.html](http://www.lugnuts racing.com/pedals.html)

AS ANY self-respecting driving fan knows, you shouldn't play a motorsport sim on anything but a decent force feedback steering wheel. However, if you drive in real life, you'll notice that one thing's not accurate at all: the brake pedal has no resistance.

In real life, this would lead to a messy mix of your head and the windscreen. Luckily though, PC users have a far less painful remedy available - just log on to the website above for a guide on how to combine a screwdriver and squash ball with your Logitech equipment to produce a firmer and more progressive brake pedal.

FORWARD and brake.







# Freeware



Steve Hogarty knows a good bargain when he sees one

Freeware is dedicated to bringing you the best free games content the Net has to offer, be it freeware, homebrews, remakes, webgames or emulation – you'll never have to buy another game again. This month, Mario graces our monitors, knights do knightly things and aliens argue in arenas with lasers...

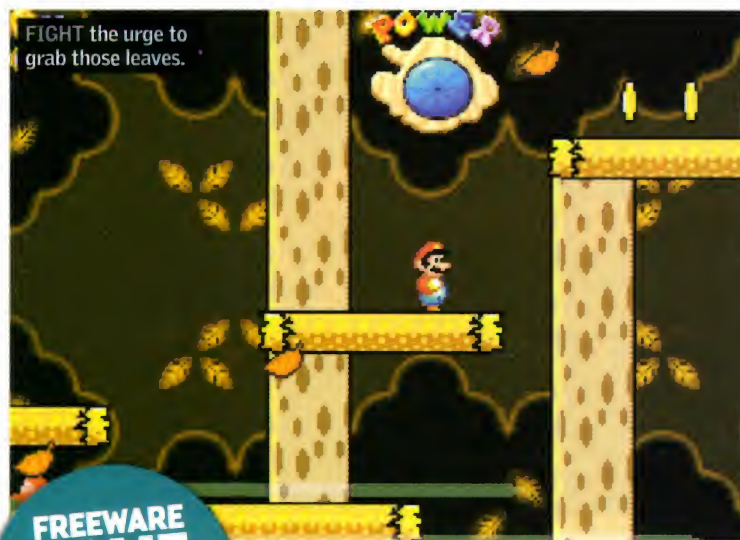


## YELLOWTAIL

And it was all yellow

Developer: Grant Linn  
www.fongu.com/yellowtail

This is weird, very weird. The first time you play this weird thing you'll say, "hey, this is weird," and then as your mouth begins to form the shape required to say, "I don't like this," you'll stop mid-shape formation, and you'll keep playing in silence. The concept is simple: drag the mouse to create little worms which wriggle in the pattern you drew them in – draw a circle and they wriggle in circles, draw a straight line and they shoot off in the direction you drew them, write a rude word and they'll wriggle in that rude word shape. *Yellowtail* is hypnotic and pointless, like a kaleidoscope wielded by Derren Brown – a colossal waste of time, but mysteriously pleasing.



**FREEWARE  
GAME  
OF THE  
MONTH**

# MARIOWEEN DX

Mario comes to PC! Almost...

Developer: Blazefire  
www.marioween.tk



*SUPER MARIO WORLD* is easily one of the best platformers mankind has ever witnessed, rivalled only by *Yoshi's Island* and *Super Mario Bros 3*. That's why, when we come across a fan-made *Mario* game in the vein of our most favourite platformer ever, we automatically switch into cynical mode. It's like showing an astronomy club your best Patrick Moore impression: they'll never be impressed, they'll point out your flaws, they'll berate the fact that your monocle is on the wrong eye and your

hunch isn't pronounced enough – there's simply no pleasing a Patrick Moore connoisseur with anything less than brilliant perfection.

So no surprise then that *Marioween DX* (or *Super Mario: Blue Twilight DX* to give it its full title) had us subconsciously preparing ourselves to slam its inaccuracies. However, beyond a few control issues (it's not nearly as smooth as *Super Mario World*) and the rare collision detection problems (getting hurt by a shell you just kicked for example), it's a pretty faithful rendition of its progenitor. The only difference with it is that it sports some entirely new levels, along with aspects and features from *Super Mario 64* thrown in for good measure, such as a health bar, triple jumps and wall kicks. Developer Blazefire has also implemented some features of its own, along with new enemies and some fantastic boss battles.

Overall, *Marioween DX* comes close to hitting the same notes *Super Mario World* hit all those

years ago – obviously not too close (this is an Icarus flying to the sun sort of situation), but close enough to keep you playing all the way through, which won't be hard as it's not all that long. Possibly the best *Mario* tribute we've come across yet.





# ALIEN ARENA 2006

Some short while ago in a galaxy quite far away

Developer: CodeRED | red.planetarena.org

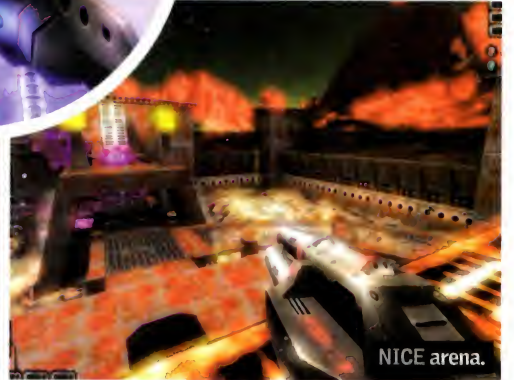
**DESCRIBED BY SOME** as "like *Quake 3* but not very good", *Alien Arena* is an online FPS which pits you, an alien, against your enemies, also aliens, in, wait for it, an arena. An alien arena. Whether the arena was built for aliens or the arena itself is alien (both seem to be true), we'll never know exactly from where the name originated – what we do know however is that as far as free online FPS games go, this one isn't half-bad.

Of course, on the flipside this means that it isn't half-good either, and besides, describing something as 'not being half-bad' is such a terrible and inaccurate measure of quality that you probably still have no idea what the hell *Alien Arena* is about.

First, this game suffers from what we've now dubbed 'multiplayer-freeware-game-itis', meaning there's a dearth of people actually playing the thing at any given time. The only way of getting a decent game is by finding like-minded people and organising one – but that can't be held against *Alien Arena*, that's merely the fault of people preferring to pay full price for a decent online FPS game, rather than paying nothing for a disappointingly average

sci-fi one. Bots bounce about and are damn near impossible to kill, weapons are wildly unbalanced and the maps, while pretty, are uninspiring and strategically barren.

OK, so the fact that it's free can't completely absolve it of sin, but in terms of getting what you pay for – *Alien Arena*'s an absolute bargain.



# KNIGHT ONLINE

Never-offline knights

Developer: Terra NCT  
www.knight-online.com.my

**FREE! A FREE** game! I think the fact that this bit is called Freeware and it's stuck here in the Freeplay section somewhat dampens the impact the word 'free' actually has. So let's repeat it one more time – free! You don't hand over any money, and you're being given a full 3D MMORPG with knights and orcs, battling and levelling up and all sorts of looting and MMOGerrific (it's a word) fantasticisms (that's not a word).

It has neither the user-friendliness of *World Of Warcraft*, nor the technological superiority of *EverQuest II*, but it excels with a huge array of items, weapons and armour, all of

which are upgradeable if you possess the right scrolls. The entire world revolves around the concept of a war between orcs and humans, so PvP is most definitely in, with universal scorekeeping and base-capturing gameplay abound.



Of course, it doesn't have the depth of the more popular bastions of MMORPGing, but (we may be repeating ourselves here) it's free, and definitely worth a shot if you fear opening your wallet.

## WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

Web Sudoku

8		6	9	4	
	1	2	3	6	8
		7	3	1	
	8	9	7	3	
9		8	3		6
	7	6	4	8	
	4	3	9		
5	9		4	1	2
7	2		8		9

Developer: Clever maths people  
www.websudoku.com

Quiet now, we have to sneak this Webgame Of The Month past Sefton, as he's quite vocal about his dislike of the new Vorderman-branded crossword-beating craze. Well, we all hate Sudoku too, but we reckoned mentioning *Web Sudoku* would let us take the piss out of Vorderman. Remember that time on *Countdown* when the C-word came up on the board? That really put her in her place – take that Carol, with your smug sense of satisfaction, your mathematical intelligence and your pert, supple breasts... Firm, yet yielding... And your eyes like Irish meadows after a summer rain, your beauty transcending time... And that smile, that wall of teeth both terrifying and humbling. Oh Carol, two from the top and then wherever you like please...



# FREEPLAYPLAY!

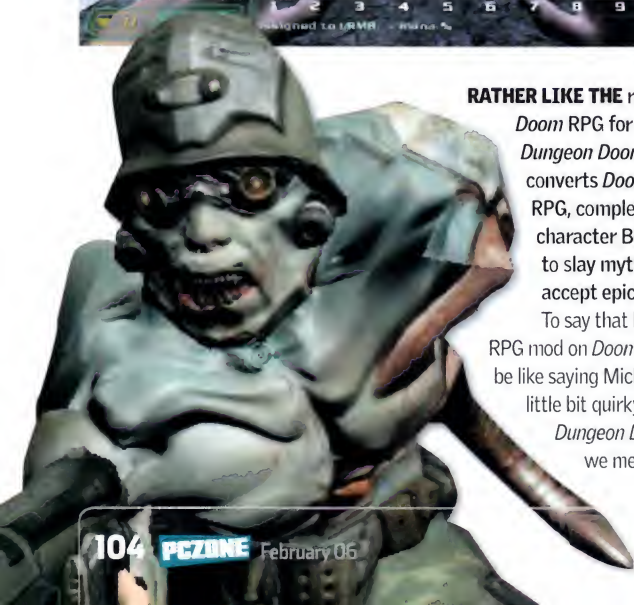


# DUNGEON DOOM

**PLAY: MOD**

Steve Hogarty reckons *Doom*'s about to get *Diablo*-lical

[dungeondoom.planetdoom.gamespy.com](http://dungeondoom.planetdoom.gamespy.com)



**RATHER LIKE THE** recently-released *Doom* RPG for mobile phones, *Dungeon Doom* is a mod that converts *Doom 3* into a full-on RPG, complete with the character Betruger asking you to slay mythical beasts and accept epic quests. To say that basing an in-depth RPG mod on *Doom 3* is strange would be like saying Michael Jackson is a little bit quirky. But that's what *Dungeon Doom* does. What we mean is, imagine

taking a game as unsophisticated as *Doom 3*, and loading it up with upgradeable stats, randomly-generated dungeons, up to 100 levels of said dungeons, more stats, a load of items, shops, power-ups, magic spells and every other RPG truism this side of a *Diablo* clone, before adding a cardmaster mode, which turns the whole experience from a frantic FPS to a comprehensive RPG to a strategy-based card game... Well, you see where we're going. It's bizarre, unsettling and surprisingly not all that bad.

It stumbles when it comes to its interface, which, bless their modder socks, is probably the best RPG interface you can hope to find in the *Doom 3* Engine. It's also insanely difficult to play, even at the lowest difficulty settings, plus it's mind-blowingly confusing if you're not a hardened RPGer with an intrinsic knowledge of the genre's axioms. But give it time and a lot of patience, and you'll find there's a lot of fun to be had crawling around the various dungeons collecting gold in an attempt to buy a bigger weapon and some better armour.

If anything, you have to admire the *Dungeon Doom* team's courage, and the fact that they've actually gone

and done something interesting with the *Doom 3* Engine deserves praise. There's a lot of content on offer here, and for some reason it's strangely addictive once you get past the initial difficulty hurdle. There's also a storyline in there, and an alignment meter that effects the way the story is told, which, coupled with the random dungeon generator, means you've reason to play it more than once.

While let down somewhat by the restrictions of the engine, *Dungeon Doom* does its damndest to deposit some *Diablo* into demonic *Doom*'s dearth of depth. Alliteration, you see.

STATS SCREEN			
items	abilities	spells	equipment
name	lvl	next	Steve the New
pistol	1	10	class: fighter
shotgun	1	2	level: 1
machinegun	-	2	experience: 0
grenade	-	3	next level: 300
chainsaw	-	4	ability points: 2
plasma gun	-	5	status points: 0
rocket launcher	-	6	
bfq	-	8	Strength: 14
healing	-	3	
			Intelligence: 13
			Dexterity: 8
			Wisdom: 11
			Vitality: 11
			Armor class: 0

BETTER renew Henry's contract. Wait, wrong game...



# NATURAL SELECTION



Tony Lamb revisits a favourite that just gets better with time...

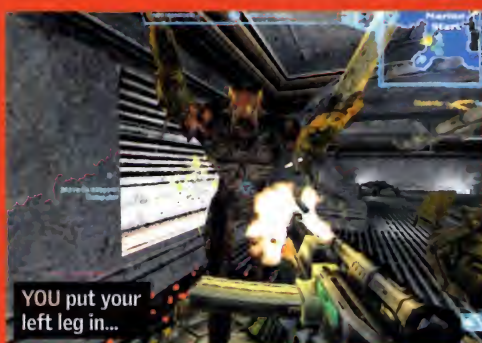
[www.unknownworlds.com/ns](http://www.unknownworlds.com/ns)

**NATURAL SELECTION** WAS one of a handful of mods that narrowly missed getting into our Top Ten list, and it was only the presence of certain iconic names that kept it off a well-deserved podium position. Now three years old and operating in the Steam environment, *NS* is a well designed and constructed mod that manages to combine the atmosphere and tension of *Aliens vs Predator* with the visceral action and bloodletting of *Starship Troopers*.

At its most basic level it's a team deathmatch mod with a simple multiplayer-only 'aliens vs marines' premise, but it also offers a raft of cracking maps, excellent custom skins, textures and animations, cool weapons and addictive, adrenalin-charged gameplay. There's more too, because marines have to use strategy and communication if they want to survive, while aliens need speed, reflexes and sheer aggression to win the day. Thought and

practice are essential for both – this isn't a mod for the casual player.

With a large and enthusiastic fanbase, plenty of online support, a *Half-Life 2* version in the pipeline and a recent update that adds a new map among other tweaks, *Natural Selection* is still a gem. It's a hard game to perfect, but well worth the effort.



FUNNY-shaped TV...

## BLADE RUNNER

Andy Robinson wonders if cacodemons dream of electric sheep?

**DOOM 3** MIGHT be pretty, but *Blade Runner* is a whole lot prettier. To us, id Software's scary monster-mash doesn't hold a candle to the beautiful cityscape and neon-clad prostitutes we all love from the 20-year-old sci-fi classic. The lights, the guns, it's all enough to make us cancel our Friday night pub session to spend a

night in holding an unsociable *Blade Runner* marathon.

Fortunately, this *Blade Runner* map for *Doom 3* enables you to not only gawk at some gigantic neon porn signs, but blast some pesky marines with a shotgun at the same time. The map faithfully recreates *Blade Runner*'s bleak cyberpunk world,

complete with textures inspired by the film. The level structure is varied and well designed, and while the arena isn't as massive as the towering skyscrapers would have you believe, this plays well to *Doom 3*'s low-player count and free-flowing style of deathmatch. Well worth a look if you're easily entertained by blinking lights.

### PCZONE TOP 5 TOTAL WAR MODS



#### 1 ROME: TOTAL REALISM

A hugely popular mod, this aims to crank up the realism with a rebuilt map, improved combat, re-textured units and more.

#### 2 CHIVALRY: TOTAL WAR

Bringing the medieval world back to life with this mod, which offers over 60 playable units, custom maps and plenty of knights.

#### 3 THE FOURTH AGE: TOTAL WAR

Set after the films, this *LOTR* mod has plenty of clashes between Rohan horsemen and orcs.

#### 4 WARHAMMER: TOTAL WAR

Pit the hordes of chaos against the high elves in this mod of the popular Games Workshop realm.

#### 5 DARTHMOD

Another realism mod, this one focuses on the performance of individual units with AI enhancements, formations and custom battle locations.



# FREEPLAYPLAY!

## TRACKMANIA EXTREME

www.trackmaniagame.com



Andy Robinson eXpands his horizons with *TrackMania's* insane expansion



WE'D say that's the wrong way.

0:45.34

**TRACKMANIA: SUNRISE** took our love for the game to new heights with its community-infused nature and drop-dead gorgeousness. Now, developer Nadeo has gone and made

the expansion more extreme than a flaming ninja on a rocket-powered snowboard. It's called *TrackMania eXtreme* with a capitalised 'X' – the crazy French obviously trying their

best at connecting with 'the kids' – and what's on offer is about as far away from normal driving as the M25 is from being a fun Sunday jaunt.

*TrackMania eXtreme* adds new tracks, a truckload of building blocks to place in the game's track editor and the new game mode, Stunt. You may have thought that the original courses were impressive, but Nadeo has now added more loops than an overworked Hula Hoop factory. The death-defying jumps in Stunt mode invite you to clear small towns in a single charge, waving goodbye to realistic driving physics as you soar through the sky, ignoring the normal laws of gravity.

The additional track editor pieces have kept us rather busy concocting our own ridiculous loops and jumps, which makes this easily the most fun we've ever had driving a virtual sports car up a 40ft ramp. If we were 16 again, we'd call this expansion 'wicked sick'. After we'd necked a bottle of Tesco Value vodka that is.



TIME to go loopy.

0:49.05

Target: 1:45.49  
Best: ???

35



## RICOCHET Regurgitated Gordon

www.steampowered.com

**RICOCHET IS ANOTHER** classic mod that sprouted from the welcoming bosom of Gordon Freeman's HEV suit. Players are pitted against each other on a series of floating platforms above a purple void, armed only with some particularly sharp throwing-discs. You can't jump and you can't crouch; your only means of escaping Frisbee death are some craftily-placed jump platforms and the little legs the good lord gave you. The more ricochets you line up before hitting your opponent, the higher your score – thus the ingenious game title. The best thing about this classic *Half-Life* mod? You've probably already got it. *Ricochet* is included for free with most copies of *Half-Life* and *Half-Life 2*, and is available for download now from Valve's Steam service. Off you go then.

## PATH OF VENGEANCE

Suzy Wallace settles down for a Chinese takeaway



www.lotus-arts.org



**FIGHTING WITH ANY** weapon to hand, attempting backflips and speaking in a language no-one understands are things that most of us only accomplish after a few too many bevies. It's all standard fare in the Wuxia genre though (which has

spawned such classics as *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon* and *House Of Flying Daggers*), and you can be cast as the hero with the help of this single-player mod.

*Path Of Vengeance* is centred around sword-based combat, accomplished with the deft clicking of all three mouse buttons. While this does lead to inevitable bouts of button-mashing, the use of combos and a yin-yang/attack-defend system adds some more depth to the combat. Levels on offer range from rice paddies to underground

cave systems, and while the environments feature some gorgeous oriental touches, the levels can feel a bit sparse in places. Most annoyingly, the lack of any checkpoints will soon have you practising kung-fu kicks on the nearest inanimate object as you're forced to replay sections of levels again and again.

While *POV's* undoubtedly got some great ideas behind it, a tough bit of discipline's still needed to refine the gameplay into something worthy of becoming our *Hero*.



WHERE'S Lara?



DOUBLE archers.  
Where's the lemonade?







# FREEPLAYPLAY!

# WOW ADD-ONS



ui.worldofwar.net and www.curse-gaming.com

**Mark Sorrell** gets more from *World Of Warcraft* without having to spend any dosh

**W**ORLD OF WARCRAFT is brilliant, we all know that. Smashing gnomes in the face, setting fire to trolls and killing dragons with a special axe – it's the stuff of legend. But you don't just buy the game, you also pay the subscription, so it only seems fair that you should be able to get a little bit more for your money. And you can. There's a whole world of add-ons out there that will let you change your *WOW* experience into something almost unrecognisable – and best of all, they're all free. So take our hand as we guide you through some of the more useful offerings available...



## Scrolling Combat Text



Get this first. Put down the magazine immediately and go and get this, it's brilliant for everyone. *Scrolling Combat Text* places information about damage and debuffs coming in, and damage and healing going out directly in the centre of your screen, so you can see exactly what's going on in the fight without needing to take your eye off your opponent. Get it, and you'll wonder how you ever played without it.

## Bank Items



An idea so simple, you'll wonder why it isn't in the game anyway. This just lets you see what's in your bank while you're not physically there. It doesn't let you add or remove items, it's strictly for checking what you have, but when you're a 10-minute flight from civilisation and you need to know exactly how many Mithril Bars you have (happens more than you'd think), this is a simple, easy solution.

## Titan Panel



A hugely popular mod, *Titan Panel* adds a thin panel to the top of your screen that gives you instant access to all kinds of information, from how much money you have to your current levelling rate. It's incredibly discreet and also supports a vast range of plug-ins (add-ons for add-ons – it's a crazy world out there) that will let you keep track of every conceivable piece of information. Essential stuff.

## CTMod



This is a compilation of all manner of add-ons that will stretch your customisation further still. Along with adding useful functions such as letting you choose new ways to display your Health and Mana, or relocate tooltips, this also lets you move and reconfigure your action bars with a fair degree of flexibility. You can also move your bags, set notes on the World Map and send multiple items to one person in one mail.

## Discord Action Bars



This is strictly for the hardcore, and completely replaces your entire interface with up to 120 buttons which you can move, resize, re-colour and even add special functions to. While the level of functionality is bordering on the insane, you do have to be willing to put in quite some time setting it up before you'll get the most from it. But if you know what you want, *Discord* will let you do it.



"AS CLOSE TO WAR  
AS YOU'D EVER  
WANT TO GET." - Official Xbox Magazine







SEQUEL TO THE GAME OF THE YEAR

# CALL<sup>OF</sup>DUTY<sup>2</sup> ★★

Infinity Ward returns with more cinematic intensity and chaos than ever before, in World War II's most climactic battles. Join your squad and choose your single-player missions, or go online for intense multiplayer action.

[www.CALLOFDUTY.COM](http://www.CALLOFDUTY.COM)



PC  
DVD  
ROM



ACTIVISION

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[activision.com](http://activision.com)





# Be a film god in The Movies

Paul Presley brings you the advice you need to make it as a superstar...

**Y**OU MAY HAVE read about our upcoming Zonedance Film Festival in issue 162, and as a result rushed out to join the millions buying copies of *The Movies* so you can participate. As a result, you may be wanting to know how to get the most out of your movie-making experience.

Here, the critically acclaimed director/producer/writer/caterer of *Shenannygoats*, *Shoot The Top Off Of My Heart* and the upcoming *Space Zombies (In Space): The Motion Picture* offers some advice to first-time camera jockeys.



## Need:

A copy of *The Movies*  
An online connection and a link to IMDB  
A thick skin

## What you'll get:

Critical and public acclaim ✓  
People hailing you as the next Spielberg ✓  
Movies that make a vague amount of sense ✓  
Pale skin and hollow eyes from too much time in the editing suite ✗

## 01 A Quick Play-Through

It's not immediately obvious, but there's more to be found in *The Movies* by playing through the Career mode before you open a Sandbox game. It can take a while to reach the end, but as well as unlocking the bonus credits sequence, it also unlocks far more options in the less competitive freeform play mode. Hence it's worth running through a full career at least once to give you the most options when you start your advanced movie-making life.



## 02 Writer's Blocked

All good films start with a script (contrary to what Jerry Bruckheimer's output might indicate) – and *The Movies'* movies are no different. Before you embark upon the delights of the Advanced Movie Maker, it's well worth spending a while storyboarding your masterpiece on paper first, rather than just jumping in and randomly picking whichever scene looks good at the time. Script all dialogue ahead of time and pre-record it too, remembering to assign each segment to an on-screen actor for proper lip-synching.

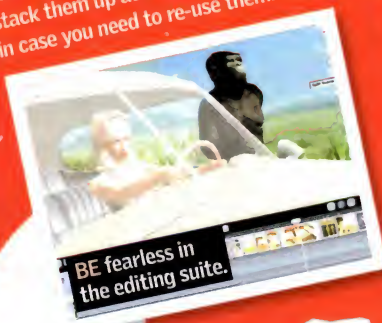
## 03 Supercuts

Never underestimate the power of editing – don't be afraid of shooting entire scenes if all you need is a small snippet. The joy of post-production means you can chop around at will, and judicious pruning will help keep the pace up and stop audiences getting bored. One extra tip though – don't chuck those cutting-room scenes straight in the bin. Instead, stack them up at the end of your film in case you need to re-use them.



## 04 Behind You

One of the most under-appreciated aspects of *The Movies* are the good old backdrops. Useful not just for providing something to look through windows at, creative use of customised backdrops can enhance any film. The official forums have a vast collection to download, but it's easy enough to make your own. Simply resize any picture you have to 1024x256 and save it as a JPG or GIF. Combined with a basic stage set or a close-up shot, you can devise some very innovative shots.







05

## Credit Where Credit Is Due

You may already know how to cut down the standard credits as needed, but you don't have to stop there. Credit sequences can be removed entirely and replaced with something far more creative. Regular *ZONE* forumite LiquidVirus has a particularly good example at the end of his film *Deconstruction* (movies.lionhead.com/movie/9356). Effective use of subtitles, the basic stage set and custom backdrops can work wonders.

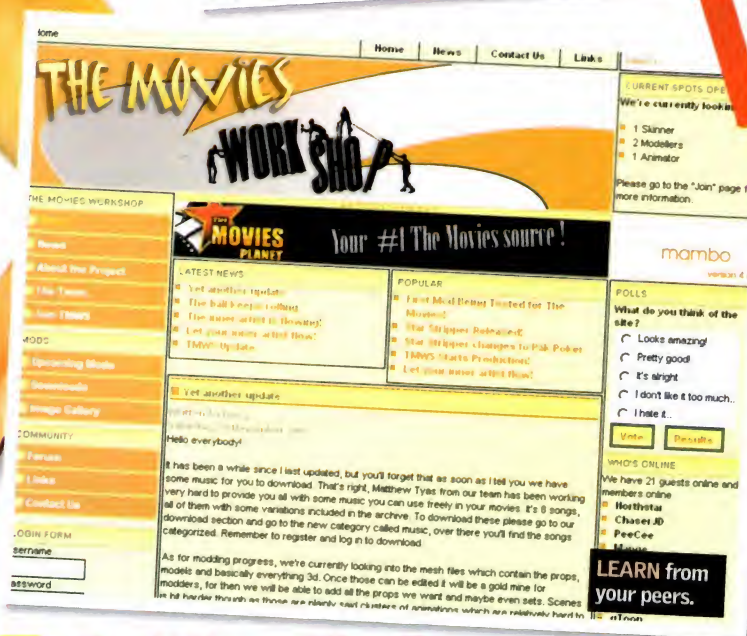
## 07 Cross Dressers

Unfortunately, *The Movies* sometimes has some pretty random ideas when it comes to outfitting your stars in each scene. In one scene, your leading man will be dressed in a smart dinner jacket and fighting off the villains, the next he'll be a confused-looking giant chicken. When starting any film, make sure you drag your leads from the Advanced Movie Making screen straight to the wardrobe icon and set their global costume to avoid random changes. More than that, if you're planning on using extras in each scene and want to maintain any sense of continuity, save any custom costumes for quick access to the correct shirt and trouser combinations.



## 06 Fading Lights

One problem you'll have as the years progress is that of your stars getting older and more tired. Fame may be immortal, but people aren't. The last thing you need as your big-name talent starts looking into retirement homes is a dearth of fresh faces to fill the gap. Make sure you start recruiting your next wave of actors and directors as the previous generation reaches the 40-50 mark, then cast them as supporting talent alongside your more bankable stars to help give them a boost up the walk of fame.



## 08 God Bless The Fans

There's a thriving mod community already out there for *The Movies*, one of the best being tmws.themoviesplanet.com. As well as downloadable backdrops (see above) and a hack to increase the amount of employees you can choose from, there's a wealth of copyright-free music here to add extra atmosphere to your epics.



**THE HOTTEST NEWS ON THE PLANET...**

**COMPUTER AND  
VIDEO GAMES .COM**

**CVG**

**FROM EUROPE'S NO.1 GAMING WEBSITE**



## HOW TO...

# Make a game

## PART SIX

**Dan Marshall** makes a friend... 



**I SWEAR BLIND** I'll never complain about poor AI in games ever again. Have you any idea how goddamned difficult it is? I mean, it's not as though I need to code my bot with a hunger-variable or an existential dread of his own mortality or anything – just to run about picking up power cubes, with a basic sense of self-preservation. How hard can it be?

At first, I tried coding a single-celled life form, and leaving my PC on all weekend. I'd assumed the natural course of evolution would have him fighting fit by Sunday tea-time. I was wrong...

Instead, I've spent most of this month snapping keyboards and punching walls in frustration as my artificially 'intelligent' NPC decides the best tactic is to run endlessly into walls before blowing himself up. If there's a dangerous area of the screen – be it piping hot lava or a pit full of rusty nails and mousetraps, you can guarantee the little twat will make a beeline straight for it and jump right in, head first.

Slowly but surely, though, I began educating him with little snippets of advice, nurturing him and basically being Yoda to his Luke. Then what happens? The little computer person has only become self-aware or something, because now he's unstoppable! Within moments of re-spawning, there he is pumping you full of lead and laughing manically. It's really creepy – every once in a while I'll squint in disbelief at the screen thinking, "I didn't teach you how to do that..."

### ALL ALONE

Although a bot goes somewhat against *Gibbage's* ethos of enjoying sweaty, huddled-over-a-keyboard games with a friend (like in the olden days), I think it was a necessary addition due to the fact that we gamers aren't renowned for

### Gibbage goes global


**Yes people, the long, long wait is over – *Gibbage* is here...**

Somewhere on this month's DVD, cowering behind the dynamic-bump-map-lit-shaded-bollocks-whatever spectacular of the latest blockbuster, is a demo of a little game named *Gibbage*. I've given you a full tutorial and two whole maps to enjoy. Why not throw caution to the wind and fire it up? Then hurl abuse at me because it crashes: dan@gibbage.co.uk. Bring it on.

our social skills, and some people out there are perpetually destined for the single-player option. However, in making the effort, *Gibbage* has finally become a full, well-rounded title.

So, what for the future? I'm busy hacking away making more weird and wonderful levels in which to blow seven shades of shit out of your friends, but until then, why not fire up the exclusive demo on this month's DVD and have a play yourself? You might be pleasantly surprised at just how much fun indie titles can be, and rediscover the sense of simple delight that playing games can bring.

Hell, why not try picking up a coding book and having a crack yourself? I promise you, it's not that hard. Besides, the feeling

of joy you get as the end credits roll on someone else's game is absolutely nothing in comparison with the sense of completion you get putting that final line of code into your own. Oh wait... My phone's ringing. It's probably a massive game studio with a juicy contract for me! Heeeellooooooo? 



### Need:

A deep understanding of the human mind  
A cheap keyboard stockist  
Someone to make you coffee at 4am while you stare bleary-eyed at a monitor

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A smug sense of glee ✓  
A hobby you can talk to girls about ✗

**FIGHT** against random acts of god in *Gibbage*.



IT'S a 21st century videogame. Of course it has zombies...



NO game is complete without a monkey touching itself.

### If you want more...

[www.indiegamer.com](http://www.indiegamer.com)

Where we proper indies hang out and slag off multi-million dollar productions.

[www.gibbage.co.uk](http://www.gibbage.co.uk)

Where all the info on *Gibbage* will be – once I learn how to write websites too. Sigh...

[encoremusic.dmusic.com/](http://encoremusic.dmusic.com/)

My composer's portfolio – if you're an indie developer, I highly recommend him.



# abandonware



**Kosta Krauth's** monthly focus on abandonware games and utilities

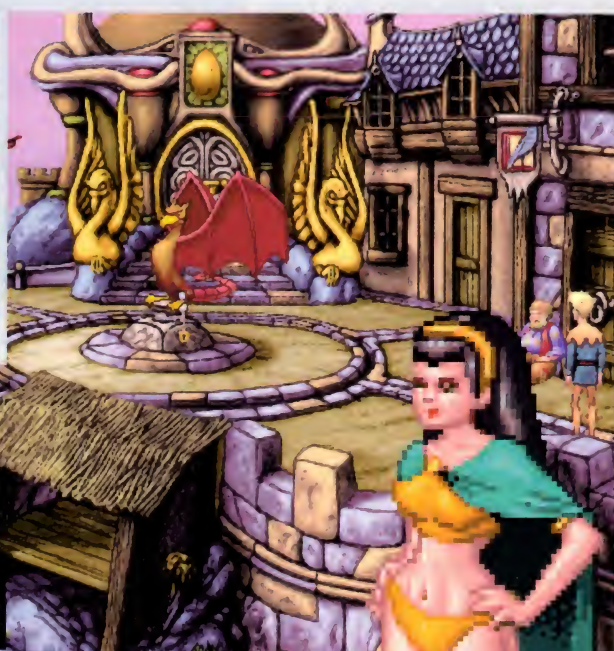
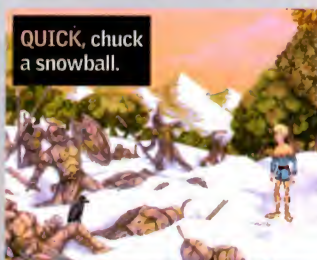
## What is abandonware?

Abandonware is computer software that's no longer being sold or supported by its copyright holder, such as the classic sci-fi RPG shooter *System Shock 2*. However, game copyright is protected by law for 70 years, so even though you can't buy these games, downloading them is technically illegal. *PC ZONE* doesn't condone filthy criminals. Or even ones that have had a good scrub.

**W**ELCOME TO OUR fifth Abandonware section. We kick off this issue with further tips for DOS emulator DOSBox. If you've been using DOSBox for a while to run your ageing PC games, you're probably tired of sorting out the correct drives and directories every

time you boot it up. You'll be happy to hear that there's a way around this. In your DOSBox start menu group, there's a file called DOSBox.conf. Click on it and find the line that begins with [autoexec]. Everything written under it will be executed at DOSBox startup, so you can add all directories and drive

changing commands right there. Now, next time you start DOSBox you'll be ready to play right from the off.



## Fable

ABANDONWARE  
GAME  
OF THE  
MONTH

DEVELOPER Symbiosis Interactive YEAR OF RELEASE 1997



Nope, this isn't the recent Lionhead title – the original *Fable* is a decent point-and-click adventure game from Symbiosis Interactive that dates back to 1997.

The game's story revolves around a race of astral beings called the Mecubarz who take over your planet. As time passes, one of the high priests in the Mecubarz clan gets hungry for power and, with the help of four accomplices, decides to steal the power from the other clan members. The plan goes awry and, as punishment, the planet is divided into four parts – ice, fire, water and mist. Your task is to reunite them all and kill

the cursed demons that guard each one – nope, hardly the most revolutionary of plots.

The script also received mixed reviews – some found it to be immature and filled with lame puns, while others thought it was funny and quirky. Yet most agreed on one thing – the hand-drawn backgrounds and animation are very beautiful, which doesn't come as a big surprise considering they were knocked up by an ex-Disney artist.

*Fable* does have its flaws and annoyances, which include over-simplistic puzzles and a clumsy interface, but the beauty of the scenery and animations will overcome any problems and provide you with hours of enjoyable adventuring through its colourful mystical worlds. Well worth checking out if you're a closet point-and-clicker.



The developer of the 1997 *Fable* game was Symbiosis Interactive, once part of the Telstar empire – you know, the one that used to flood down-market supermarkets with piss-poor LPs in the '70s. Strangely enough, *Fable* is the first and the last game ever produced by Symbiosis Interactive, as by 1999, Telstar Electronic Studios Ltd was in serious debt due to poor sales of its games, and was sold off to Take 2 Interactive. Whether or not Symbiosis will breath again remains to be seen, but the fact that no-one kicked up a fuss when Lionhead used the name *Fable* for its own gorgeous RPG last year, means we've probably heard the last from the company.

You can check out Kosta's abandonware website at [www.abandonia.com](http://www.abandonia.com)





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# STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest



## Evil Steve Hill meets a friend in the *City Of Villains*

**I'VE OFTEN WONDERED** who plays these games. Well, not so much wondered as blatantly pigeonholed. In fact, I recently wrote a 'hilarious' piece in *The Interactive Entertainment Weekly*, *MCV*, berating the sad-sacks who spend every waking hour levelling up their pitiful characters in an ultimately pointless dick-waving exercise. Painting a clichéd picture of 'humourless pricks' wasting 'countless hours sat alone in a fetid grief-hole sporting three-day-old undercrackers and a crumb-strewn beard,' it was like shooting fish in a barrel. As intended, the geeks bit back and the hate-mail was copious, predictable and indignant (and of course humourless).

But what if everyone playing a MMORPG wasn't a greasy-haired potential serial killer? That would possibly be even more frightening. Guess what? There's a man I know – I'd go as far as to call him a friend – who on the surface is reasonably normal. Something of a geezer, you could say. If I had to sum him up in three words, it would probably be "Oi! Bollocks! Chelsea!" It certainly wouldn't be "Level 26 Mastermind."

### JON'S NOT MAD

Let's call him Jon (as that's his name). By day, Jon is a ruthless marketing executive, ordering his minions about while he sits back and takes the acclaim. Yet by night,

he is Doctor Robotnik, a ruthless villain, ordering his minions about while he... Hold on? Anyway, the point is, he's not the kind of person you'd expect to get involved in this kind of nonsense. The only game I've ever known him to play is the peerless *Pro Evolution Soccer*, largely via marathon sessions at his flat – barely a mile from mine – generally accompanied by fine whisky and/or the contents of his medicine cabinet. Playing almost to the point of blindness, there have been times when walking home has presented a clear and present danger to the local flora and fauna, not to mention myself.

Yet throughout this, he's never mentioned his secret life. Although thinking back, I do remember seeing him playing *City Of Heroes* in his office, dismissing it as an aberration. And more recently, there was a mention of downloading the *City Of Villains* beta, at which stage I genuinely had no idea what he was on about.

### DOCTOR WHO?

But here we are, sat in our respective flats on a Friday night, about to commit wrongdoing in *The Rogue Isles*. I'm on first and set fire to a few tramps to pass the time. Within minutes, I have to rebuff the advances of Amirdemaru, who tries to lure me into his supergroup.

"With enough people and prestige, I'll build a big base and then we can raid others," he pleads, but I let him down gently by explaining that I'm waiting for a friend.

On cue, Doctor Robotnik plinks up online and joins my team. Waiting for him to find me, I sidle up to pair of blonde lovelies and chance a "Hi".

"Who you talking to?" asks Robotnik, and it turns out I'm talking to him on Teamspeak, which would explain the blank looks from the ladies. Looming into view, there he is, sporting a fancy cape, a skull motif and what's either close-cropped ginger hair or an exposed brain.

"Looking good," I proffer. "Nice gear," says Robotnik, clearly appreciating my understated garb.

"Wanna see my bots?" he asks, apropos of nothing. "OK," I say, at which point he magics up a small army of robots. "Impressive," I coo, mildly frightened.

He's keen to get on with a mission, and I tell him I've "got some more snakes to kill". Trudging towards the starting point, I'm slightly perturbed to find that Robotnik and his robot army are already there, having conveniently flown. As ever, I simply wade into the snakes with a selection of fiery weapons, but Robotnik reprimands me, offering the tip: "I pull them, you wait and

kill when they come close." It seems to work, and we're soon on our way to another snake-based job, sent down a stinking cave like a Rentokil for reptiles.

### GO GO GO!

Back on the streets, we set about robbing a bank. Again, I just wade in, but Robotnik starts ordering me about, telling me I've "got to work systematically". Holding off the guards while I smash the vault door, we make good with the cash. Commissioned to defeat some Hellions, Robotnik again cautions: "With those big groups, if you run in you get too many attacking at once." Calm down, it's only a game...

By now I've had enough, and the appeal of one more mission is nowhere near as strong as one more game of *PES*. I consider suggesting meeting up for a drink, but decide against it in case he brings his f\*\*\*ing robots with him.

I'm still not convinced, but as I point out: "I don't even have to walk home..." **PC7**



**But what if everyone playing a MMORPG wasn't a greasy-haired potential serial killer?**





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**PUBLISHER** Ubisoft  
**WEBSITE** [www.everquest2.com](http://www.everquest2.com)  
**PRICE** \$39.99 (approx)

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EverQuest II (DVD Edition)

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Poster map of Qeynos and Freeport

Antonia and Lucan poster signed by Heather Graham and Christopher Lee

In-game items: scenery paintings, talking statue and baby dragon pet for player's house



**N**OTHING SAYS 'Special Edition' like a big silver box. Double DVD cases are all well and good, but beyond a small book, you're not going to fit much of the traditional RPG-associated merchandising bumph in such cramped environs.

Take the *EverQuest II: Collector's Edition*. A big silver, metal box, practically overflowing with the kind of goodies that are like nectar to any RPG fan that remembers the good old days.

I mean to say, a cloth map! Cloth! Haven't had those since Lord British was in his *Ultima* heyday. Or the velvety pouch, promising hidden treasures and, indeed, containing them in the shape of a smart silvery *EverQuest* coin. You can feel your inner geek rising can't you?

### HIDDEN TREASURES

Nonetheless, this is exactly the kind of thing that we want in our gaming value packs. Why is it only MMO producers

seem to realise this? This mammoth pack is jammed with goodies, real and virtual. Soundtrack CD, making of... videos, posters (signed by the game's lead voice-over actors – Heather Graham and Christopher Lee), an art book, trailers, video footage and in-game items to help your character decorate his or her living quarters in style.

It's a stunning pack, especially when you take into account the quality of the game. *EverQuest II* is an online world rife with goodness. Developer SOE may have been gathering headlines for all the wrong reasons thanks to the horrific mess it continues to be making of *Star Wars Galaxies*, but the team responsible for *EQII* has been hard at work turning it into one of the most pleasant online experiences you can find.

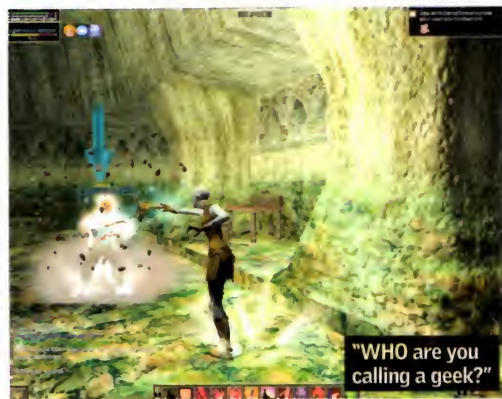
Since its debut in November 2004, it's been one of the few MMOs to continually learn from both its own mistakes and the actions of its rivals. At the same time,







PRETTY, ain't it?



"WHO are you calling a geek?"



EVERQUEST - always with the rat-bashing.

WIN!!!

Five copies of *EverQuest II: Collector's Edition* to be won!



Fancy caressing the big metal box for yourself without having to hunt it down in the shops? Well luckily, we have five copies of the *EverQuest II: Collector's Edition* to give away to the first five readers who correctly answer the question below and have their entries pulled out of the PC ZONE competition-o-tron machine. Send the answer on a postcard addressed to: *EverQuest II Special Edition Competition*, PC ZONE, Future, 1 Balcombe Street, London, NW1 6NA.

**Q. What are the names of *EverQuest II*'s starting towns?**

a. Qeyport and Freenos b. Qeynos and Freeport c. Kensington and Chelsea

Send your entries to us before Wednesday, February 1. Good luck!



KORDA goes meat shopping.



YES. I appear to have the Pot Noodle horn.

innovations such as the 'module' adventure packs (optional self-contained dungeons that can be purchased for low one-off fees) show a level of design thought at work that few rival games can offer. What's more, the recent additions such as voice commands and climbable scenery continue to push the game to the front of the pack.

## GEEK CHIC

In fact, the only thing really wrong with *EverQuest II* is *World Of Warcraft*. As an online game, *EQII* is beautiful to look

of Norrath, preferring a fiery, pain-filled death to life in SOE's twee world.

It's a reputation that's somewhat undeserved, especially as *EQII*'s creative team went to great pains to try and get as far away from the original *EverQuest*'s style as it could. Yes, there's a lot of cliché to be found, but the two-tone nature of the game (the good and evil paths feel very different), the friendly community and the way the game has continued to evolve over the last year and a bit are all plus points. Add that to the basic fact

## EQII is one of the few MMOs to learn from its mistakes and from its rivals

at, packed with content, extremely well structured at all levels, full of innovative expansion ideas and extremely well supported by its live team.

Unfortunately, it also has a lifetime of *EverQuest* nerd heritage to live down, something that Blizzard's runaway hit never suffered from. Gaming social commentators Penny Arcade once ran a telling strip about a *WOW* beta character turning down safe haven from an upcoming server wipe in *EQ*'s world

that SOE future-proofed the engine so much, that even on today's highest spec PCs you'll be hard-pushed to run it at the maximum graphic settings, and it all adds up to provide a gaming experience that, given the chance, could easily rival anything *World Of Warcraft* offers.

## HUNT AROUND

The only real proviso is that since the recent *Desert Of Flames* expansion pack came out (issue 162, 75%), this

special edition version is tricky to find in the shops. It is available direct from SOE's website ([www.everquest2.com](http://www.everquest2.com) - follow the links to the 'Store'), but otherwise you'll have to hunt around or try the overseas versions of sites such as Amazon. You can find a smaller *Limited Edition* on the UK sites.

It's worth it, though. Whether your *WOW* addiction is fading and you fancy something different, or if you're new to fantasy MMOG world and want a gentle introduction, *EverQuest II* is a fulfilling, enjoyable experience that deserves its chance to shine. **PCZ**

## THE RAVAGES OF TIME

WORLD OF WARCRAFT	1st
GUILD WARS	2nd
EVERQUEST II	3rd

*WOW* still has the popular vote, *Guild Wars* still rakes the punters in thanks to no monthly fees, but *EverQuest II* is still equal to them both in terms of gameplay.



## SUPERTEST

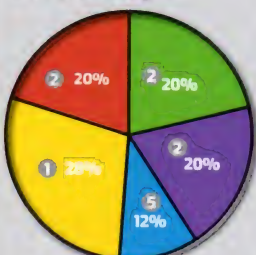
# GAME MUSIC

A different tack this month as the fab five each champion their top gaming tunes



### YOUR VIEW

Last month's subject: Is id Software still the king of the shooters. This is what you thought...



QUAKE III: ARENA **1st**

QUAKE 4 **2nd**

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN **2nd**

WOLFENSTEIN: ENEMY TERRITORY **2nd**

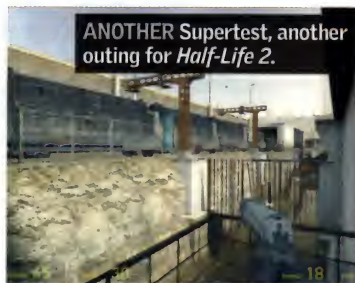
DOOM 3 **5th**

**Crow555:** "Quake and Quake II stick in my mind as being among some of the most important games in PC gaming history. Therefore with Quake 4 being a continuation of Quake II, it has to be the chosen winner."

**PawsofEvil:** "It has to be Quake III for sheer multiplayer mayhem. Eyes with legs, ichor, gore! Oh! The humanity! Plus its engine gave us COD."

**Madameye:** "RTCW. It was released at a time when the market wasn't saturated with WWII shooters. When we talked about atmosphere and engaging gameplay, it really delivered the goods."

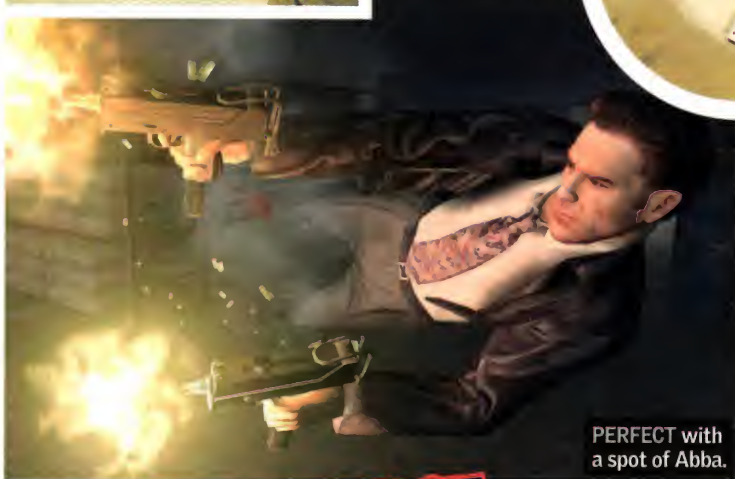
**PlumpOrgan:** "Quake III: Arena was perhaps the first real online battler that inspired the kind of vibrant mod community that spring up around most online games nowadays. It also gave us rocket arena, which still has to be the baddest, maddest, rock hardest fragfest in all of onlinedom."



ANOTHER Supertest, another outing for *Half-Life 2*.



"I say the Cheeky Girls should be in *Quake V*."



PERFECT with a spot of Abba.

**YOU CAN'T BEAT** a good song, that's what they say. Who they are and why they chose to burst into our bedrooms in the dead of night to deliver this piece of information is anyone's guess, but they have a point. In the gaming world, a good musical score can make the difference between a terrible game and a still terrible game, but one that at least has decent music.

For this month's gathering of minds in our regular podcast, we took it upon ourselves to rate the best use of music in a PC game. That's best USE. Not simply the best music. Which is why the *GTA* series, while certainly earning plenty of discussion time,

wasn't one of the five games selected. Instead we each chose a particular champion and set about convincing the others. Will picked *Republic Commando*, Jamie chose the ever-present *Half-Life 2*, Prez went left-field with *X2: The Threat*, Suzy stayed true to her roots with *NFS: Underground* and Steve plumped for *Max Payne 2*. Load the file from our cover-disc on to the MP3 player of your choice and listen to our verbal in-fighting.

Sadly, despite arguing the toss for 20 or so minutes, a definitive conclusion eluded us. So once again the final word is yours. As you read this you should be able to find a poll running on our lovely website ([www.pczone.co.uk](http://www.pczone.co.uk)). Just press the 'INTERACT' button and follow the links to the PC ZONE forum. Once in you'll find a Supertest 164 thread hovering around the top of the list, awaiting your input. Just vote for the game you think best utilises music, leave a comment and we'll print the results and the best of your opinions next month. Assuming we're not still all giddy on mulled wine and eggnog from the festive festivities. **PCZ**

**GTA was discussed, but wasn't selected**

**LOVE FIST**



CUE John Williams.



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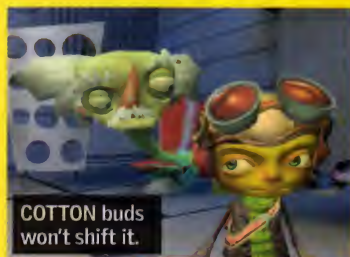
## PLAY 10 DEMOS!



## DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

# PSYCHONAUTS

Join us as we venture inside the mind of *Tim Schafer*, a man who took the spirit of old-style LucasArts and wrapped it in gaming joy...



COTTON buds won't shift it.

**P**SYCHONAUTS IS MANY things: among them a glittering example of intelligent comedy, originality and beautiful artwork. Occasionally it isn't the greatest platform game ever, but for the purposes of this love-in we'll ignore that, as in the past year, there honestly hasn't been a more surprising, interesting or lovingly-crafted game in the whole of PC or console land. So how the hell was it made? Let's ask Double Fine's Tim Schafer...



BEWARE the cows! Not all milk is enriched.

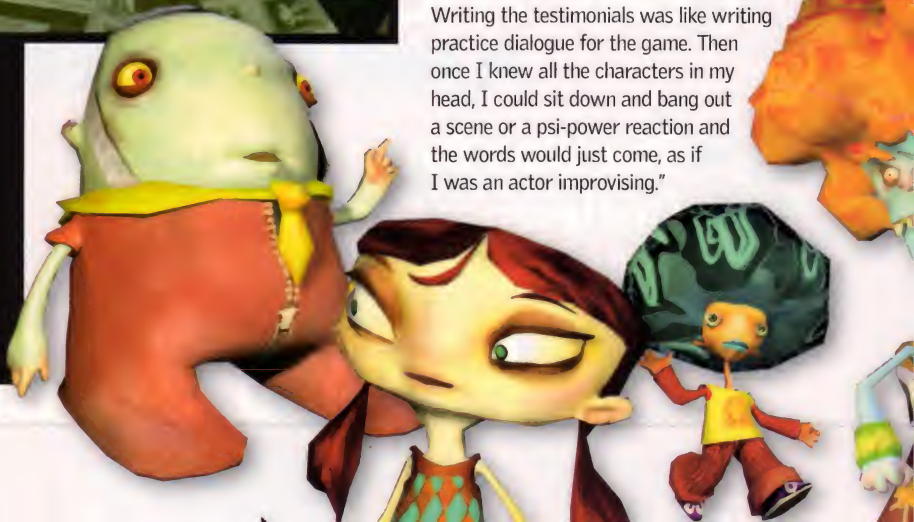


DOGEN: the kid who kills squirrels with his mind.

**01** **CREATING LEVELS AROUND REAL MINDS:** "That's one of the main inspirations for the game – real people and their personalities. I would meet some interesting person, or even just be thinking of a friend of mine and I'd think: "Man, what must it be like inside their head?" For example, Boyd the guard is actually based on a guy that used to hang out in the alley where our old offices were. He would mutter a lot to himself about how the government was out to get him, how they were tracking him with "optics" and "plastics" and how "the pelicans knew what they were up to". I wrote down everything I heard him say and put it in the game."

### 02 MAKING KIDS SOUND LIKE KIDS:

"I made in-depth back-stories for all the kids, describing where they grew up, what their hobbies were, who their friends were, who they had crushes on and who they hated. I made mock Internet profiles for all of them as if they were members of an online social network, making it look like they'd left little testimonials on each others' Web pages. Writing the testimonials was like writing practice dialogue for the game. Then once I knew all the characters in my head, I could sit down and bang out a scene or a psi-power reaction and the words would just come, as if I was an actor improvising."







EVIL, or just mentally maladjusted?

**03 TEAM DOUBLE FINE:** "The whole thing is very collaborative. I made up the characters and the general idea of what the inside of their head would be like, and then I worked with the artists and designers as they came up with the specific visuals and gameplay structure. Plus, as the programmers and animators implemented those designs, they put in their own ideas and changes. In the end, you have something that's better than what any one person could have done on their own."

**04 HEARTS OF DARKNESS:** "How people handle tragedy tells you a lot. Some people obsess over it, letting it control their conscious thoughts. Others never talk about it and bury the memory of the tragedy deep down inside. This game provides a natural way to go deep into someone's mind, find that vault and look inside. So you can go into Sasha's mind and see how he handles his painful memories by controlling his thoughts. Milla does it by keeping a loud party going on in her mind at all times. Gloria can't manage either of these two coping mechanisms, so her personality swings from happy to sad in an instant. She appears crazy because the symptoms of her pain are so apparent. Sasha and Milla seem sane, when really they're just better at working around that pain, and more importantly, hiding it. But in this game, you can go past people's personas, crack open their vaults and see what they're hiding."



THE memoirs of Agent Nein.



"HE'S destroyed the puppy orphanage!"

**05 MADDEST THING YOU'VE EVER DONE?** "Well, there's a lot of crazy stuff in *Psychonauts*, but I've never really thought of it as that strange because it's just making real worlds out of pretty average human thoughts. If you look at the environments and characters in the in-mind levels of the game, and see them as just the literal form of a mental structure, they're not that weird. They're all based on normal, common thoughts: dreams, paranoia, grief, repression, obsession, rage, fear, guilt, insecurity. But when you take something like rage and try to imagine what that would really look like – and it becomes a huge Day-Glo bull running through the streets of your mind – then it just shows how even normal human thoughts and feelings are amazing things."



**When rage becomes a huge Day-Glo bull running through the streets of your mind, it shows how amazing normal thoughts and feelings are**

Tim Schafer creator, *Psychonauts*



# LOOKINGBACKCOMMENTARY



EACH NPC views you in its own way.

**06 DEPTH OF HIDDEN CONTENT:** "When a player finds a small detail in a game, it's what makes the difference between them saying, 'that was a good game,' and, 'I loved that game!' You can't skip that kind of detail, even though it may seem unimportant. Players notice and care, and word gets around. When a player notices that detail, it creates a trust between the player and the game-maker. The nature of that trust is hard to explain, but it has something to do with the fact that we care about the game, so it's OK for you to care about it too. Also, coming up with those little details is fun."

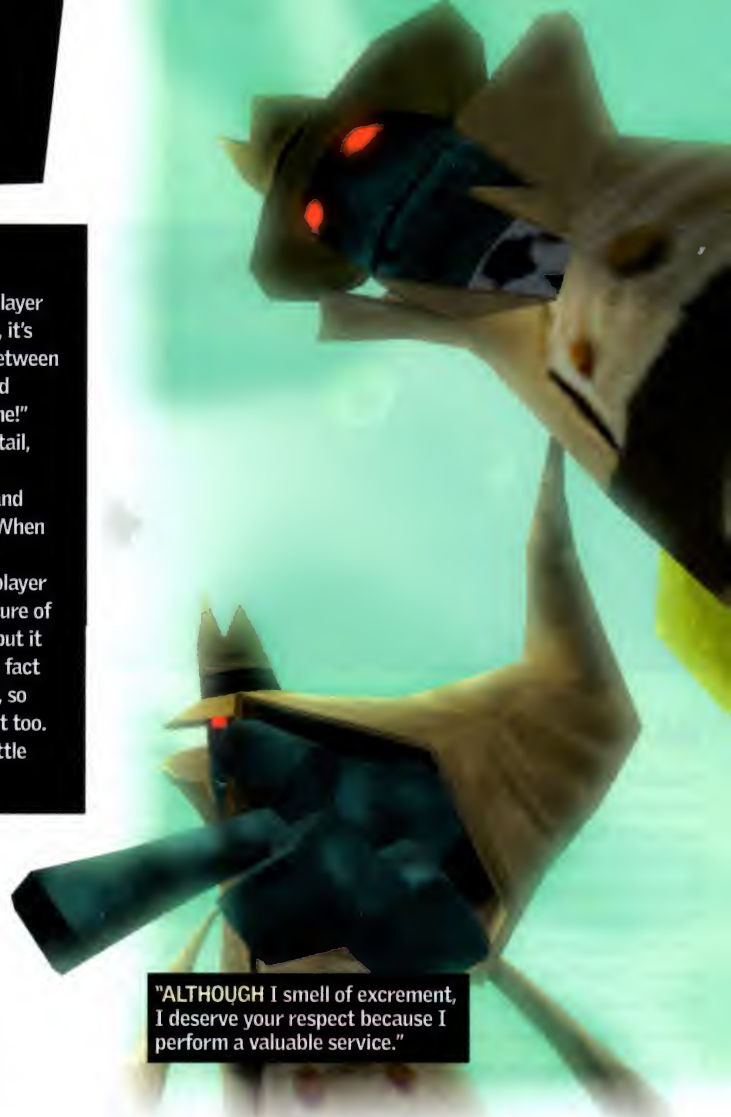
## 07 THE BRAIN OF A CONSPIRACY THEORIST:

"I heard once that a paranoia is just another form of self-absorption. If you think that everyone is out to get you, then you must think the world revolves around you. That intrigued me a lot, because I liked to imagine the inner world of this person where the whole world revolved around him, where even the streets wrapped around his house like spiderweb, with him in the middle. So that was the basic concept for Boyd, the paranoid security guard. And then our environmental concept artist Peter Chan came back with these drawings of twisty streets that bent around like ribbons; and then our physics programmer Paul Du Bois developed the tech for arbitrary gravity, so those drawings work. From this, our lead designer Erik Robson went off and designed this set of puzzles based on mysterious trench-coated G-Men wearing ridiculous disguises, and that inspired me to write all their dialogue based on the idea that the G-Men think they're passing as phone-workers, housewives and sewage workers. So, in that kind of collaboration, it's not just that everyone throws something into the mix, but everyone reacts to what the others are doing and inspires the others to come up with new ideas."



THE rise of a hero. Like *Batman Begins*, but on paper.

**08 WHY 'RAZPUTIN'?** I stole that name from one of our animators, Razmig. He actually worked at LucasArts at the time, I knew him through friends and thought that the name he went by – Raz – was really cool. So I stole it. But then we hired him on at Double Fine and things got a little confusing between Raz the game character and Raz the animator. And our associate producer at the time, Camilla, suggested the long form be 'Rasputin', but then our lawyer changed the 's' to a 'z' so that we could register it as our own trademark. You have to misspell things if you want to own them it seems. That's why it's spelled 'Froot Loops', for example. Well, that and the fact that it's not really fruit."



"ALTHOUGH I smell of excrement, I deserve your respect because I perform a valuable service."







THE 'Daddy Long Legs' legs remain unexplained.



THIS cow should beware the milkman too.

**09 ORIGINS OF THE TABLETOP NAPOLEON COMPLEX:** "The earliest design docs just said that there was a guy who thought he was Napoleon Bonaparte, and when you went into his head, you were suddenly on the battlefield at Waterloo. It was going to be an actual war going on. But then, when we first sat down to figure that out, the animation resources needed were crazy, plus it was hard to figure out puzzles for it. Someone suggested making it kind of a turn-based war, where the soldiers only moved once in a while, so you could set up trip-wires and traps for the enemy between moves. And then that just got gamier and gamier. We shrunk the soldiers and world down so that Raz could move them with telekinesis.

"The original level designer and a programmer tried to make an actual game you could play on that board, kind of like *Stratego*, but the programming was getting more and more complicated. At a certain point the whole level design was trashed. But I really liked the tiny buildings and game pieces, and I liked putting the camera on free-fly mode, flying down to the level of the tiny trees and little streams. I've always liked miniature worlds like that.

"So Erik redesigned the whole level and came up with the idea of playing it on three different scales, and of having the game be more about recruiting the game pieces with adventure-game style puzzles. Waterloo World had been trashed and redesigned a few times and our first publisher wanted to cut it, but in the end it turned out great. According to one poll I saw, it's a lot of people's favourite. So you see, some ideas you just have to keep banging away on! And don't be afraid to move the design backwards (sometimes all the way back) to move forward in a better direction."



BEST level of the year?



**10 CHARACTERS YOU'D LIKE TO RESURRECT:** "Glottis. Or Hoagie. I'd like to do a game about Hoagie and Glottis going on a road trip together." **PCZ**







# DAVID BRABEN

Jamie Sefton docks his Cobra Mk III to meet the visionary force behind legendary space combat/trading game *Elite*



## Why Do We Care?

Because in 1982, along with university chum Ian Bell, he created the seminal space sim called *Elite* – a freeform game that allowed you to become any character you wanted, including trader, miner, bounty hunter and renegade smuggler. Braben went on to make the sequels *Frontier: Elite II* and *First Encounters* without Ian Bell, as well as develop the recent sequels to Chris Sawyer's *RollerCoaster Tycoon* franchise through his games company Frontier Developments (see page 70).

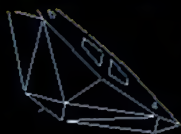
## What's He Doing Now?

Braben is currently busy working on the next-gen thriller *The Outsider*, which promises open-ended gameplay set in a modern-day Washington DC, plus high-tech weaponry, Bond-style gadgets and revolutionary character interaction. Frontier Developments also has two secret projects in the pipeline, as well as a certain *Elite 4*.





# Remember These? BEST OF BRABEN



Load New Commander (Y/N)?

**ELITE:** It may look a bit dated, but Braben & Bell's wireframe 3D space sim was revolutionary when it was launched back in 1982.



**FRONTIER: ELITE II:** David Braben's 1993 sequel to *Elite* had better (colour!) graphics, as well as a fleshed out universe.



**FIRST ENCOUNTERS:** 1995's *Elite III* again expanded the universe into new territories, but the game was notoriously bug-ridden.



**V2000:** This sequel to the classic *Virus*, takes Braben's *Defender* homage into full 3D as you save six worlds from a killer virus.

**Q** How did you begin making games for a living?

**A** I started programming on the Acorn Atom ('80s home computer), and came up with a game demo called *Fighter*, which was simplistic 3D dogfighting in space. I then met Ian Bell at university and we decided to collaborate. Work immediately began on *Elite*, which was originally known as *The Elite*, but we changed it because it sounded a bit poncey.

**What was the main problem in creating a free-roaming universe for *Elite*?**

We had to compress everything and work out how to store solar systems, market prices and so on in as small amount of memory as possible – the BBC Micro only had 22K! I wrote a program to generate a galaxy, and essentially we were throwing away whole galaxies because the distribution of the stars didn't look nice or because it had the word 'arse' in it.

**What was the reaction from potential games publishers?**

I remember presenting *Elite* to Thorn/EMI, and the reasons for rejection were the game's major selling points! They said it wasn't a game that took ten minutes to play through, that no-one would want to provide their own cassette tape to save their position (*Elite* was the first game to do this), it was too complicated, there was no score (it was the amount of money you had instead), and you only had one life. So we showed it to Acorn – a company run by techies – and they were just very excited and hugely keen to sign us up.

**How did you come up with the hyperspace misjumps and the terrifying Thargoid alien attack?**

With no star or planet, the game ran a lot faster and we were able to add twice as many ships. So we pondered: "What can we have in deep space?" The Thargoid ship looked so different yet so interesting – so we decided that these guys could intercept you in hyperspace. And it would be really frightening as well, because if you hadn't got enough fuel to jump out of deep space, you'd have to fight them.

**Were there any stand-out moments from the development of the sequel, *Frontier*?**

Oh yes. I loved the fact that when I travelled somewhere in the galaxy, I had no idea what was there – and I was the person making the game! I spent time with Cambridge University trying to make sure that the game was properly modelling various theories of planet formation too, like how often a habitable world comes up, for example. I think *Frontier* also did a lot more in terms of reputations of the characters – like how you could have different reputations in different areas of the



galaxy. People want to be bad, but they also like to be heroes – this was a way to satisfy that.

**Frontier is our staff writer Steve Hogarty's favourite game – he wants to know about the space dragon and the black hole...**

I haven't heard the space dragon one before! No, there's no dragon, but there are black holes. It's amazing how many things you see online that are either stretching the truth or just plain wrong. Actually, in some of the later versions of *Frontier* we included some of the mythology from the fans!

**What do you make of so-called 'Elite clones' such as Egosoft's *X3: Reunion*?**

None of them seem to get why *Elite* is the way it is – they just focus on the nostalgia. They're doing the space travel and everything else, but they're missing the driving force behind *Elite*, which is the fact that you get so attached to your character and that when you're building your progress, you're really afraid of being shot. We'll have much more character interaction in the new *Elite*.

**For fans who were disappointed with *First Encounters*, is *Elite 4* something to be excited about?**

Absolutely. I was disappointed with what happened with publisher Gametek's handling of the *First Encounters* release. It was a long time ago, but it was a disgusting episode in my opinion, and it's why we've held back from doing another *Elite* for so long. Also, a lot of young people out there won't know *Elite* now, so we've got to make sure that it stands on its feet. *Elite 4* will be something that makes you go: "Wow!" It's where you can bury yourself in the world and you won't want to come out of it. **PCZ**

**David Braben likes...**



**ASTRONOMY:** David is fascinated by the possibility of alien life.



**SAILING:** He's a competent sailor and owns his own boat.



**FILMS:** Particularly *Apocalypse Now*: "It was well put together."

**We'd throw away a whole galaxy because it had the word 'arse' in it**



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# DOMINIK DIAMOND

This month, there's going to be no nob gags, guff about my personal life and plugs for my gorgeous Alienware PC. I might make even some serious points. Sorry. I've just reached puberty and am reacting accordingly...



**WHY ARE VIDEOGAME** movies so bad? That's one of those questions that

reverberate around the brain every few months. Like 'why did kamikaze pilots wear helmets?' and 'would any judge in the land truly convict me for the torture and murder of Chris Moyles?'

Take *Doom* for example. Please. And keep it. Pickle it in formaldehyde, lock it in a chest, bury it in the centre of the earth and then wee on it. For it is one dumb movie. It doesn't just sit there and let you realise it's dumb. It parades it's dumbness like a badge of pride. It runs up and waves it in your face like a drunk auntie with her tits out at a wedding. *Doom* is so stupid, it sits at the back of the class, lips moving while it attempts to read, then gives up, shits itself and eats the result instead.

The worst thing is that throughout the press screening, people from *The Guardian* and *The Times* kept tutting in my direction, because they felt that, as I've done telly shows about videogames, that this bucket o' pish was somehow my fault.

We'll never ever get a great videogame movie now, because the boundaries between games and movies are more blurred than the rude


bits on UK hotel porn. Any other kind of game that lends itself to a decent plot is stuffed to the gusset with cut-scenes: the movie is already in there.

So, I would introduce a ban on any movie being made about a videogame that's been released since 1990. When graphics were invented. Spielberg has already thought about *Pac-Man The Movie*. Originally, John Candy was pencilled in for the role of the large-mouthed hungry sphere, but now as a casting coup, he's going for the fat guy from *Lost*. With former Take That skeleton Jason Orange playing all four ghosts.

## FLY HORACE, FLY!

I fancy Ron Howard to make a super-emotional melodrama out of 1980s ZX Spectrum game *Horace Goes Skiing*, with a sweeping orchestral score marking Horace's safe crossing of the road before a foreboding cello signals his attempt to get down the mountain.

Woody Allen turns *Q\*Bert* into a sex comedy, with the neurotic Q\*Bert himself being chased around his interstellar-tiled shelf by balls desperate to jump on his cock-nose. David Mamet turns *Pong* into a classic plot-rollercoaster, where you're never sure which bat is good and which is evil. Or who will get to 15 first.

They only make movies of videogames because some Hollywood bigwig wants to fund his coke habit by cashing in on a mass form of entertainment. Well, I beg thee: leave videogames alone and look elsewhere for inspiration. Like Sudoku. DIY. Or happy-slapping. 

**Please, take *Doom*. Pickle it in formaldehyde, lock it in a chest, bury it in the earth and then wee on it**



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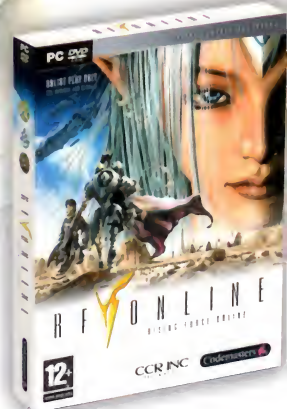


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